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# SELF, THOUGHT AND REALITY

*D. M. Dutta,*  
**Prof.- PATNA COLLEGE.**



# SELF, THOUGHT AND REALITY

BY

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ALLAHABAD :  
THE JUVENILE PRESS

1933

***Printed by***  
**M. Prasad,**  
**at the**  
**Juvenile Press,**  
**Allahabad**

***Published by***  
**T. C. Chatterji, B.A.,**  
**Leader Road,**  
**Allahabad.**

**To**

**P. B. ADHIKARI, M.A.,**

**PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY BENARES HINDU UNIVERSITY,**

**THIS WORK IS GRATEFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY  
DEDICATED.**



*D. M. Dutta,*  
**Prof.:-PATNA COLLEGE.**

## PREFACE

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THE object and the scope of the following lines are explained in the introductory chapter. All that need be added here is that the present essay is a study in the ultimate principles of knowledge and existence, and is, therefore, predominantly epistemological in character. The maxim I have kept before my mind throughout the study is that no great thinker can be seriously wrong in his deepest convictions. This has helped me to suggest solutions of a number of difficult problems that are still in the forefront of philosophical thought. By reading a philosopher with the eyes of his critics, I have evolved a new standpoint from which it may be possible to reconcile many an agelong controversy, such as idealism *versus* realism, the coherence theory *versus* the correspondence theory, being *versus* becoming, etc. My main purpose, however, has been to remove some of the obstacles which still stand in the way of a general recognition of those ultimate principles of knowledge that must nevertheless be the common platform for the competing



theories to stand upon. This is absolutely necessary in the present state of philosophy, for, not a few of the acute disputes in contemporary thought, I believe, are due to the lack of a clear consciousness of the first principles.

There are many interesting problems of contemporary thought that are not discussed here, not because they are not important, but because they are more or less of the nature of deductions following from the ultimate principles. In discussing these first principles, again, I have restricted myself to the views of those thinkers alone who represent some definite tendencies in contemporary philosophy.

My discussions have been naturally carried up to the problem of self which is undoubtedly the most ultimate of the transcendental conditions of knowledge. And as this problem has occupied a most prominent place in the philosophical discussions of India, an attempt has been made in the last two chapters to bring out the dialectic of universal thought by a brief analysis of the arguments of Sāṅkara who was admittedly one of the most distinguished thinkers of India. My analysis has been inevitably short, but even this brief consideration of Sāṅkara's position may show clearly that thought has an immanent dialectic which knows

no limits of space and time. In the end I have added a few comments on the vedāntic methodology in order to emphasise an aspect of Indian thought which is but too frequently ignored by the modern interpreters of the vedānta speculations. I have also given in this connection a short account of an important tendency in contemporary Indian thought.

Some parts of the present work have been occasionally published in the annual issues of the Allahabad University Studies, Reviews of Philosophy and Religion, and other journals. I have, however, altered at several places the modes of expressions and introduced new materials to meet the criticisms received from kind friends. I thank the editors for the permission to utilize the matter published in their respective journals.

The idea of publishing this study was suggested to me by the appreciative comments received some years ago from the late A. S. Pringle-Pattison on a most vital part of my contentions; it pains me to think that I could not complete my study while he was alive. I am particularly indebted to Professor Harold H. Joachim of the New College, Oxford, for the uniform courtesy with which he has always responded to my calls for remarks and suggestions. With his characteristic generosity, Prof.

Joachim has frequently helped the development of my thought by sending valuable comments and encouraging notes. I am also grateful to numerous friends in as well as outside India who have encouraged me with their appreciative remarks. But for their encouragement the present work would have never seen the light of the day. I am also obliged to my student, Mr. M. M. Taqi, B.A., for the trouble he has taken to prepare the index.

*Feb. 21, 1933.*

A. C. MUKERJI.

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## ***ERRATA***

| <b>PAGE</b> | <b>LINE</b> |                                                 |
|-------------|-------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| 5           | 5           | <i>for</i> except <i>read</i> expect            |
| 27          | 16          | „ beteen „ between                              |
| 149         | 25          | „ mian „ main                                   |
| 155         | 5           | <i>after</i> acquaintance, <i>add</i> which     |
| 214         | 16          | <i>for</i> unversality <i>read</i> universality |
| 263         | 23          | „ Principles „ Principle                        |
| 335         | 13          | „ difficut „ difficult                          |
| 395         | 1           | „ Lankika „ Laukika                             |



# SELF, THOUGHT AND REALITY

## CHAPTER I

### General Introduction

(Since the dawn of reflective enquiry into the nature and meaning of existence the Self has been one of the most fascinating subjects of human interest. And though it has rightly occupied a most prominent place in the vast array of problems that are generally recognised as the philosophical problems *par excellence*, yet, like every other problem, it has come to manifest in the history of thought an enormous vitality and stands to this day as one of the most slippery problems of philosophy. In ancient India, as is well known, the realization of the highest purpose of existence was made conditional on the right knowledge of self, and the perplexities which were born of the controversy on self led to the formulation of a bewildering variety of theories which cannot fail to remind one of some of the doctrines that are still in the forefront of philosophical thought. Similarly, in the history of western philosophy knowledge of self has sometimes been considered to be the *raison d'être* of all speculative



explorations of the universe since the time of Protagoras and Socrates. And in spite of the concentrated and continuous efforts of a long series of eminent thinkers, it is still a disputed question whether the supreme problem inscribed on the temple of Delphi has been really solved or not.)

The object of the present essay is to lay the epistemological foundation of a theory of self by removing some of the obstacles which have persistently clung to the problem and obscured the real issues. Consequently, it is mainly concerned with the first principles of knowledge. Such a method of approaching the theory of self through a consideration of the morphology of knowledge has a two-fold advantage. First, every theory, irrespective of the subjects of enquiry, should have an epistemological foundation for the simple reason that a philosophical conclusion is not a dogmatic assertion, and so a theory, howsoever high its certificate of authority may be, has little philosophical value till it can produce its logical credentials. If there is anything that is inimical to the real philosophical spirit and insight, it is the dogmatic attitude, the tendency to accept a position without enquiring into its logical foundation. Dogmatism may have its utility in practical life, as the ordinary affairs of our daily existence cannot

wait for metaphysical analysis and logical scrutiny. Here it is no doubt true that he who hesitates is lost. But philosophy as the thinking consideration of things cannot dispense with the method of serious and systematic thought, whatever may be the thing thought about. Hence it is found in the history of philosophy that all the serious disputes on the nature and status of self have reflected the different attitudes which the philosophers have assumed to the problem of knowledge, and that every theory of self is influenced by a corresponding theory of knowledge.

Secondly, a theory of self has a more intimate relation to the problem of knowledge than any other theory. One may investigate the nature of matter and energy, space and time, or the sun and the stars, without raising the difficult problems of epistemology. Nay, it is possible, in a considerable measure, to theorise on the problems of psychology and sociology, ethics and religion, without a clear consciousness of the principles of thought and knowledge. But a theory of self can ill afford to neglect the consideration of the ultimate presuppositions that are at the basis of every theory and every effort to theorise; because it is only when the nature and constitution of knowledge is rightly apprehended that one can expect to understand

the nature and status of the self which is the knower, invariably present in the knowledge situation. And, in fact, the historical movement of self-theories has been seriously affected by the changes in the conception of knowledge. A philosopher, for instance, for whom knowledge is a peculiar response of the nervous system to its environment would find it difficult to distinguish the self from the body, and consequently any theory which posits a spiritual self behind the body would make no appeal whatsoever to his mind. On the other hand, those who look upon knowledge as being essentially a logical construction would naturally find it absurd to identify the knowing self with the nervous system, brain or any other part of the body. Similarly, again, a philosopher who considers knowledge after the analogy of a mechanical relation between two entities will favour the conception of self as an atomic existence, while another who would reduce knowledge to practical expediency or a means to the ends of life must necessarily repudiate any theory of self which regards the distinction between the subject and the object of knowledge as being more than a practical distinction of the functional order.

From these considerations, we believe, it is amply evident that a true conception of self

is intimately connected with a correspondingly true notion of the morphology of knowledge. While there is an error in your analysis of knowledge, it is idle to except that your conception of self would not be affected by that error. Conversely, a serious discussion of the problem of knowledge cannot be continued to any profitable length without throwing a flood of light on the nature of self that knows. Hence, our discussions on the nature of knowledge will naturally illumine many of the dark corners of the controversy on self, and thus prepare the ground for a doctrine which will at least have the advantage of being constructed on a solid basis, over against those that are not preceded by a careful analysis of knowledge.

Fortunately, a good deal of sound work in epistemology has been already done since the time of Hume and Kant. And though it is true that post-Kantian speculations have not found it possible to accept the result of the Kantian analysis of knowledge as the last word of epistemology, yet, we believe, there is a substantial amount of truth in the observation of Green that it is only at rare epochs that "there appear men, or sets of men, with the true speculative impulse to begin at the beginning and go to the end, and with the faculty of

discerning the true point of departure which previous speculation has fixed for them. The intervals are occupied by commentators and exponents of the last true philosopher, if it has been his mission to construct; if it has been sceptical, by writers who cannot understand the fatal question that he has asked, and thus still dig in the old vein which he had exhausted, and of which his final dilemma had shown the bottom."<sup>1</sup> Naturally, therefore, no theory of knowledge, notwithstanding what advances it proposes to make, can afford to ignore the work of such philosophers as Hume and Kant who were the first to raise the problem of knowledge to its present status, by their determination to begin at the beginning, as well as by the thoroughness with which they carried their principles to the end. Hence, all that we are about to do in the following pages is to attempt to restate, in the light of contemporary philosophical tendencies, some of the principles of permanent speculative value that have been deposited underneath the ceaselessly changing currents and cross-currents of critical thought during what is known as the modern period of philosophy. In restating these principles, we may appear to many as advocating some of the well known philosophical tenets of dubious

<sup>1</sup> *Works I, p. 2.*

value, and our attempt may seem to be not unlike a belated defence of an outworn philosophical creed. Hence it is necessary to remark in the beginning that truth is never outgrown, nor is it discovered every day. Yet, in view of the ever-changing intellectual environment and the shifting interest of man, it is often necessary to restate in the language of a particular age those very principles which, though appreciated in the past, lose their utility and cogency or degenerate into lifeless catch-words owing to their formulation in the language of an earlier age. The race that the world is running in hot haste for the capture of an unknown prize, does not allow one to stop, far less to look back. Unfortunately, however, philosophy is a subject which demands patience to stop as well as courage to look back, and here quick return means less profit in the long run.

It may easily be conjectured from what we have already said that though the present work is something like a survey of the currents of modern thought, it does not claim to be an exhaustive history of the bewilderingly diverse channels into which the currents have flowed. And the reason is partly that that would make the task overwhelmingly heavy even if we had confined ourselves to the strictly epistemological aspects alone. But the main reason for

restricting the scope of our survey is that an exhaustive history is not called for in a work which aims primarily at laying the foundation for a theory of self. It is only those questions of knowledge that have a direct bearing on the problem of self which should be discussed in a work like this. In fact what is wanted for our ultimate purpose is not so much a complete criticism of the epistemological tendencies that have ever made their appearance in the history of thought, as an apology that man's philosophical adventures in the sphere of epistemology at least have not been all a wild goose chase, though, unfortunately, this is the verdict of people in general concerning the total output of the philosophical toil. Philosophers in particular have a peculiar knack to misunderstand each other in respect of even the gravest problems of thought, and they are so far rightly considered as wasting their life and energy over ineffectual bickerings and useless hair-splitting. We are, however, strongly of the opinion that these differences are due to the extralogical prejudices which they have smuggled into their philosophy; and once the principles of strict proof are eclipsed by the intoxicating solicitation of a social, ethical or religious dogma, imagination rides roughshod over reason, and then philosophy degenerates

into a veritable pandemonium of uncontrolled fancies.

An explanation of the way in which we have characterised our attempt in the following pages may be useful at this place. Though our main purpose is epistemological, we have not hesitated to call it an idealistic interpretation of reality ; for, first, it is, we venture to think, impossible to accentuate the problems of knowledge without touching upon the age-long controversy between idealism and realism ; and, secondly, the present study is so much inspired by the thoughts of the eminent idealists that we have not only considered it less misleading to name it after their philosophical creed, but have tried to substantiate our conclusions by frequent reference to their arguments. Yet, however, it is an impartial study of some of the basic principles of philosophy, and the careful reader will not fail to detect in crucial places the rift that lies between our position and what is generally known as idealism ; and if our contentions have been apparently directed against realism in its various forms, they have been sometimes used to show the excesses of the idealistic position as well. In fact, there will be ample evidence to show that we have read the idealist with the eyes of the realist and the realist with the eyes of the idealist.



And in so doing an attempt has been made to develop a theory of the universe which is neither purely idealistic nor entirely realistic. Thus, we have been compelled to differ from many prominent thinkers of both the schools, for which we may apologise by remarking, in the words of Green, that we best do reverence to their genius, we most truly appropriate their spirit, in so exploring the difficulties to which their enquiry led, as to find in them the suggestion of a theory which may help us to walk firmly where they stumbled and fell.

The only other remark which we would like to make in this introductory chapter is in connection with our claims to finality and originality. So far as the first point is concerned, it is perhaps true that finality in a philosophical enquiry is bound to remain a mere ideal; yet that is no reason why fresh attempts should not be made to narrow down the sources of error. This is our only apology for the present work. As for originality, the present writer has always felt the essential correctness of the pregnant remarks of an American philosopher that "It is the fate of the philosophical student to be cut off, by his very task, from all but a very relative and imperfect sort of originality. He is simply making articulate the life which he is privileged to enjoy. He invents nothing; he

only confesses. . . . Others create, he observes. Consequently, were a philosophy original, it would be *ipso facto* untrue." Then it is further remarked that though we find some lonesome students of philosophy claiming originality even now, yet "such men, when they appear nowadays as once in a while they do appear, are anachronisms; and you will always find them either ignorant of the history of the very subject that they propose to revolutionize or incapable of reading this history intelligently."<sup>1</sup> Similarly, F. H. Bradley admits that with regard to originality in a philosophical work he entertains 'a feeling of contempt.'<sup>2</sup> The 'imperfect sort of originality' however that we claim for the following survey of contemporary philosophical tendencies consists in bringing them within the fighting range of each other, by reformulating some of the basic principles of knowledge in terms of the present age, and developing them in a partially new direction. It may be easily seen that such a restatement is of some value for any real progress of philosophical thought; for, knowledge is bound to stagnate and move in a circular groove if every age has to make a fresh start. No progress,

<sup>1</sup> J. Royce, *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy*, p. 343.

<sup>2</sup> *Principles of Logic*, p. 515.

either in science or in philosophy, is possible till the achievements of one age can be made the basis of the further construction of the next ; and if philosophy in spite of its now fairly long career, has not given us even the bare foundation for constructing the house of knowledge, that circumstance by itself is sufficient to make one sceptical of the potentiality of the philosophical speculation in general. But we believe, and this we shall try to justify in the following pages, that the philosophical expedition of man has not been entirely abortive ; a number of first principles of permanent significance has been unearthed by the tireless activities of the modern thinkers—principles which must lie at the foundation of every true philosophy, however unconscious it may appear to be of their existence or value.

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## CHAPTER II

### The Realism of David Hume

Our age, inspite of its love of catholicism and humanitarianism is in many respects essentially individualistic, and our conceptions of human progress and our ideals of human freedom are vitiated by the same imperfections which characterised the thoughts of the eighteenth century. It is our indifference to the great lessons which the nineteenth century imparted to humanity at large, that is responsible in a large measure for the cataclysm to which we are driving ourselves—a cataclysm which overtakes humanity as often as man's attitude stops at the "everlasting no." The only difference between the disaster which is awaiting us in the near future and that of an earlier age appears to be this that while the latter affected Europe alone, the effects of the present "Aufklärung" are likely to be co-extensive with the world. The enlightenment has been aptly described as a "crisis and a revolution in the history of the world and of civilization, a movement that penetrates into all departments of life, that

began in the eighteenth century and still continues, so far as the mass of the people in our day is in the condition which at that time was characteristic of the few.”<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact, in the name of a democratic ideal and human emancipation what we are actually striving for is the unmolested supremacy of the individual over everything else; and it is perhaps high time for us to realize that an extreme emphasis upon the abstract individual can lead to anarchy but no democracy, and the self-refutation in this case is not less inevitable than in abstract universalism. If it is important to remember that the whole is for the parts, it is perhaps more important to insist that the parts have no significance apart from the whole and that everywhere order and harmony presuppose an amount of subordination and plasticity on the part of the individuals. There can be no law of the moment because an abstract moment is the very negation of that permanence and stability which a law implies. If the momentary fragments of my conscious life be not held together by the unity of a law which is more than these fragments, and similarly if the caprices of the exclusive individual, be not subordinated to a whole which is over-individual, there can be neither self nor society. In one case, it is a

<sup>1</sup> Erdmann, *History of Philosophy*, II., p. 283.

“mere manifold” without the unity of self-consciousness, as in the other it is an absolute anarchy without a community of purpose. Hence whenever the abstract individual of the moment is emphasized at the expense of the whole, it inevitably leads to disintegration in every department of life. In politics, it leads to the theory of “natural right” which essentially undermines the foundation of political obligation; in ethics, it leads to individualistic hedonism which ultimately dissolves morality into selfish pursuit of pleasure; in religion it leads to pietism which spurns at all creeds and insists on a non-ecclesiastical or private form of religion; and finally, in philosophy, it leads to scepticism and distrust of reason, thus overthrowing the ultimate principles of knowledge and experience. In fact, when Locke says that man is born with a title to perfect freedom, and an uncontrolled enjoyment of all the rights and privileges of the law of nature<sup>1</sup> it is the application, to the political sphere, of the same principle which underlies his views on the “simple ideas,” the principles namely, that the particulars have a nature of their own apart from the whole to which they may, but need not, belong. This is just what consistency requires. It is as impossible for Locke to give priority to the whole in

<sup>1</sup> *Civil Government, Ch. VII, Sec. 87.*

politics while insisting on the supremacy of the parts in the theory of knowledge, as it would be impossible for Hooker and Grotius, Hobbes and Rousseau, to vindicate the superior claims of the individual in their politics and at the same time emphasize the importance of the categories in their epistemology, if they had taken up the problem of knowledge at all.

This individualism, which is characteristic of the empirico-realistic attitude of mind, is everywhere due to an imperfect view of the individual. It emphasizes an element of reality in its abstractness from the whole, and does not see, to borrow a phrase of Bosanquet, the self-transcendence of the individual. Each atom is supposed to be a hard nucleus impervious to others, and their relation to one another are then thought to be purely extrinsic; so that their belonging to one world is after all a mere accident and is not essential to their intrinsic nature. This is the real significance of individualism which is equivalent to abstractionism. The realistic mind, says Mr. J. W. Scott,<sup>1</sup> stands idly before the given...abandoning all attempts to construct it trying simply to *take* it, muttering to himself in succession, "just this," "this

<sup>1</sup> *Realism and Politic*, an article in the *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 1917-18.

*here*," "here *now*," this *out* here now." This realistic temper, as he attempts to show through the doctrines of Bergson and Russell leads to the narrowness of current industrial movements of Europe. It favours the multiplication of small organisations "so that the individual who cannot get scope for himself in the service of a great wide state may be able to select a sphere which suits him and get scope there for that in him which the wider world has no use for." Mr. Scott has rightly traced the origin of individualism to the realistic attitude of mind, for the realistic abstraction of the external world from the knowing mind is but a particular application of a more general principle—a principle which underlies the common-sense interpretations of experience as well as the realistic and the empirical methods in philosophy.

The object of the present chapter is to lay bare what appears to be the fundamental fallacy in some of the current streams of philosophical speculations. The semblance of advance which they are generally supposed to have made is due to our not realising the exact nature of Kant's answer to Hume, the consequence being a repetition of the "Humian fallacy." In fact, the substantial correctness of Hume's position and its unassailability have been recognised not

The  
Realistic  
Dogma.



only by the realists and the pragmatists of our time, who avowedly build their speculations upon the basis laid by the Scottish sceptic, but this recognition has very often come from quarters where sensationalism and empiricism are supposed to be exploded doctrines. The necessary implication of this of course is, in the words of J. H. Stirling, that Kant's vast transcendental machinery is a signal failure.<sup>1</sup> But are we prepared to accept this judgment? Kant's works, it is well known, were the results of reflections upon various problems of his time. His special intention was to enquire if the positivistic and mechanical view of the world were not ultimately reconcilable with the demands of moral and religious consciousness; and this spirit of mediation is prominently present throughout the arguments of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. But even if it be conceded that Kant over-played the mediator this should not blind us to his permanent contributions to philosophy, specially to epistemology; yet, we fear, this is just what has happened. The debatable aspects of his teaching have exercised and are still exercising such a harmful influence upon many of his readers that they are slow to recognise the value and significance of even the central epistemological

<sup>1</sup> Mind, 1885.

contentions of the *Critique*. It may be useful therefore to bring the permanent elements of Kant's philosophy into a focus which will at least have the use of determining the lines upon which alone the Kantian position admits of further elaborations. Nay, such a focalisation is absolutely indispensable for any real advance of speculative thought, particularly at present when the old exploded theories are again struggling for life and even supremacy, fortified by mathematical researches and abstruse dialectics. This circumstance sufficiently bears out Green's remark that each generation requires the question of philosophy to be put to it in its own language, and unless they are so put, will not be at the pains to understand them.

We shall make an attempt on this line at a further stage of our discussion. Meanwhile, we shall try to show that it was the realistic assumption of pre-Kantian empiricism which worked itself out in the hands of the Scottish sceptic whose failure to make Locke consistent was but an indication of the self-contradictory nature of the fundamental realistic dogma. The general impression that Hume's was a sensationalistic philosophy and that Kant laid bare the fallacy of the philosophy of abstract feeling has had its disastrous consequences. Unconscious of the deeper foundation of empiricism,

The  
realistic  
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(1) Pre-  
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cism

and interpreting Kant's criticism as a mere intellectualistic retort to sensationalistic exaggeration, contemporary thinkers have fallen victim to the same realistic dogma which Hume thought it beyond his power to abandon and which Kant found it beyond his power to accept. This is surely subversive of the real object of philosophical activities. Our aim, therefore, is to show, in however imperfect a form, that Kant's answer to Hume has thoroughly undermined the only basis upon which all forms of realism must ultimately stand, and consequently the realistic and empirical philosophies of our time, in spite of what value they may possess for students of philosophy do not represent a real development of thought. If we attempt a brief formulation of the underlying principle of empiricism it will be found to consist in the assumption that the "unconnected manifold" have a superior reality in comparison to their unity. From this assumption follow several others, namely, that the object is but an assemblage of different sensations held together by the arbitrary bonds of association, the self is likewise a bundle of perceptions which may as well be conceived as not forming such a bundle, and the relation between the object and the self is purely mechanical so that the cognitive relation which brings them together has no

effect upon their intrinsic natures. In all these, the distinctions are emphasized at the expense of their unity, and the inevitable result is atomism. This atomism expresses itself in various forms in Hume. It is not only apparent in his account of the self and the world, but is the fundamental thought underlying his conceptions of the criterion of truth, the nature of abstract ideas, space and time, no less than his analysis of man's moral nature and political obligation. His method everywhere is the same. He picks out the momentary aspects of the concrete reality, considers them apart from each other, and emphasizes them in their abstract character to such an extent as to reduce their relation and unity into mere illusions or words without meaning. Hence his injunction that if in philosophy a word is used without meaning, the best course to expose it is to ask for the impression from which the idea has been derived. Nominalism, solipsism, individualism, and scepticism which are so characteristic of Hume's works are but the natural results of this original abstraction.

When we come to contemporary philosophy in its realistic and empirical forms we find that in spite of the gulf that separates the modern thinkers from Locke and Hume, they are faithful followers of the latter so far as their

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fundamental tenet is concerned. This tenet is essentially that of Locke and Hume; namely, that all the existing things are "distinct existences" having no necessary relations among them. That is, the fundamental assumption of these current philosophical streams is that the different beings are substantial existences, and their relations are but extrinsic in the sense that they make no difference to the terms between which they hold. Like Locke's simple ideas they "carry with them in their own nature no visible necessary connections or inconsistency with any other simple ideas."<sup>1</sup> The consequences of this position in current philosophy are similar to those of the Lockian and the Humian speculations—nominalism, solipsism and scepticism. Indeed it requires only a little careful scrutiny to discover that the whole of the pre-Kantian empiricism has been revived in its essential respects under the names of pragmatism and neo-realism, while, the permanent contributions made to philosophy by Kant have been missed in the breathless haste for original system-building.

It is true that the empirical method has been sometimes differently formulated. Thus Mr. Alexander points out that the word

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rical  
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<sup>1</sup> *Essay* ii. 23. 3.

empirical is intended to mean nothing more than the method used in the special sciences, it is equivalent to experiential.<sup>1</sup> Similarly W. James identifies it with the natural science method, in his preface to the *Principles of Psychology*. But the philosophical contrast between the non-empirical or *a priori* method and the empirical method can be perhaps better articulated only when we formulate the former as that which goes from the whole to the part, from the unity to the diversity ; and the latter should then be described as that which goes from the part to the whole, from the diversity to the unity. This contrast is accentuated in several places by James himself, when he says, for instance, that the most pregnant difference between empiricism and rationalism is that empiricism means the habit of explaining wholes by parts and rationalism means the habit of explaining parts by wholes.<sup>2</sup> The difference, he points out further, between monistic idealism and radical empiricism leads to a great question of vital importance, " the question, namely, whether all the relations with other things, possible to a

<sup>1</sup> *Space, Time and Deity*, Vol. I. p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> See *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p. 41 ; *A Pluralistic Universe*, p. 7 ; *Some Problems of Philosophy*, p. 35 ; Preface to Höfding's *Problem of Philosophy*.

being, are pre-included in its intrinsic nature and enter into its essence, or whether, in respect of some of these relations, it can *be* without reference to them." Empiricism, according to him, must decide in favour of the latter alternative, because when the manuscript is *on* the desk the relation of being "on" does not seem to implicate or involve in any way the inner meaning of the manuscript or the inner structure of the desk.<sup>1</sup> This externality of relation is the fundamental, and from the philosophical stand-point the most important, point which unites contemporary realism with pragmatism and distinguishes both of them from intellectualism, idealism and rationalism. "The theory which the realist finds used so frequently by his opponents" is "the theory of internal relations" which holds that "the parts or elements are all constituted by their relations to all other parts in the complex."<sup>2</sup> Realism, on the other hand, must insist on the theory of the externality of relations and recognise that the terms are in no way altered by the relations established between them and that the entity does not lose its identity by being a constituent of different complexes. This, according to Mr. Russell, is the indisputable

<sup>1</sup> *A Pluralistic Universe*, p. 80.

<sup>2</sup> *New Realism*, p. 165.

basis of realism. Thus it is clear that both pragmatism and realism look upon the world as a collection or aggregate in which all the existents are related to one another by the relation of *and*. This *and*, says Mr. Russell, represents a fundamental way of combining terms.<sup>1</sup> One is irresistibly reminded here of Locke's definition of substances as collection of ideas, or Berkeley's conception of the idea entering into an external and non-modifying relation to the percipient mind, and finally of Hume's division of philosophical relations into two classes, namely, those that depend entirely on the ideas and those that may be changed without any change in the ideas. In view of the crucial nature of the point under consideration, it may be useful to treat these similarities in a little more detail.

Locke, Berkeley and Hume are generally known as representatives of empiricism and phenomenalism. But there was a deeper bond existing between them of which their empiricism or phenomenalism was but a result. This was the common realistic foundation of their systems. In fact, Berkeley's system was idealistic only in name and aim. It cannot even be said to be what Royce calls a

The common-basis of empiricism and realism

<sup>1</sup> *Principles of Mathematics*, p. 71.



half-way idealism, as its fundamental assumption was through-and-through realistic. The tenet of Berkeley's pseudo-idealism has worked itself out in contemporary realism, which has for its ultimate basis an assumption that formed Berkeley's intellectual heritage; but its incompatibility with his system he never detected, at least in his earlier works. This will surely be challenged by the realists of our time. For, is it not the very mission of neo-realism, they will point out, to prove against Berkeley the independence of the experienced on the act of experience? Does not Berkeley together with other idealists commit the Verbal Fallacy of Psycho-physical Metonymy?<sup>1</sup> A negative reply has already been given to this by many realists who have drawn attention to the passage in which Berkeley too makes such a distinction. Prof. Laird again, in his brilliant article in *Mind* to which we have already referred, while indicating the numerous points of contact between Berkeley and the neo-realists goes so far as to declare that "it would scarcely be possible to conceive of a system which, in its intention, was more thoroughly realistic than Berkeley's." They have not, however, detected a more fundamental relation which binds

<sup>1</sup> *New Realism*, p. 259.

neo-realism with Berkeley's philosophy, yet that is much more vital than anything that has hitherto been brought forth. What is this vital agreement?

Berkeley's central thesis that the *esse* of things is their *percipi* conceals a theory of independent entities which is indeed the corner-stone of all realistic metaphysics. In spite of what he says about the dependence of the things upon a percipient mind, the "ideas" and the mind perceiving them are supposed to enter into a temporary external relation to each other like impervious atoms which remain unmodified and uninfluenced by any casual relation subsisting between them. Mr. Joachim's description of the realistic view on the cognitive relation is instructive in this connection. "Atom on one side comes together with atom on the other side; but why *this* atom should be related to *that*, or indeed any atom to any other, is a question which cannot be answered. It cannot be answered, for there is no rational ground for the relation."<sup>1</sup> So long as this position is accepted, as a true representation of facts, one is inevitably on the realistic basis, and it is immaterial whether those atoms are called ideas, impressions, *sensa* or

<sup>1</sup> *The Nature of Truth*, p. 44.

character-complexes. This atomism which was never doubted by Locke, Berkeley and Hume made their systems essentially incompatible with any form of true idealism. It may be added that atomism is the ultimate foundation of not only realism but of empiricism as well, and so a realist has consistently to be an empiricist. Thus W. James has to admit on the one hand that "mine is essentially a mosaic philosophy, a philosophy of plural facts, like that of Hume and his descendants,"<sup>1</sup> and, on the other hand, he finds that "radical empiricism has in fact more affinities with natural realism than with the views of Berkeley or of Mill."<sup>2</sup>

Hume's  
statement  
of the re-  
alistic  
position.

Hume, in spite of his differences from Locke and Berkeley, is at one with them, so far as their realistic assumption is concerned. In him, however, that assumption appears in its absolute nakedness, shorn of the dogmatic and theological embellishments. The shortest and at the same time the clearest statement of Hume's philosophical basis is perhaps to be found in the following remarks of his on the immateriality of the soul: "If . . . any one should evade the difficulty by saying that the definition of a substance is *something which may exist*

<sup>1</sup> *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 76.

*by itself* . . . I should observe that this definition agrees to everything that can possibly be conceived, and never will serve to distinguish substance from accident, or the soul from its perceptions. For, thus I reason. Whatever is clearly conceived may exist; and whatever is clearly conceived, after any manner, may exist after the same manner . . . . Again, every thing which is different is distinguishable, and everything which is distinguishable is separable by the imagination . . . My conclusion from both is that since all our perceptions are different from each other, and from everything else of the universe, they are also distinct and separable, and may be considered as separately existent, and may exist separately, and have no need of anything else to support their existence. They are therefore substances, as far as this definition explains a substance.”<sup>1</sup> If we agree to make concession to the peculiar way in which Hume states his fundamental position<sup>2</sup>, no realist would perhaps find it possible to give a clearer exposition of his philosophy within the limits of such a few lines. It is true that one of the vital points of difference between neo-realism and its older name-sake consists in its protest against the

<sup>1</sup>*Treatise*, Sec., V., p. 223.

substantialism of Locke and Reid. But, for all this, it clings to substantialism of the type which Berkeley and Hume found so essential to their systems, and while this position remains the same there is no reason why their conclusion should be reversed.

There are two more points with regard to which the contemporary realists and empiricists have been slow to appreciate Kant's answer to Hume. The belief that reality is a creative process, a flux or pure becoming, and that mind is one among other finite things holding its place on equal terms with them, has found recognition with the majority of eminent thinkers of our time. Thus, for example, as a protest against the indestructible entities of physics, Mr. B. Russell insists that "the world of immediate data is quite different from this. Nothing is permanent; even the things that we think are fairly permanent, such as mountains, only become data when we see them, and are not immediately given as existing at other moments."<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Mr. Whitehead urges that the immediate fact for awareness is "Nature as an event present for sense-awareness and essentially passing. There is no holding nature still and looking at it."<sup>2</sup> For the

<sup>1</sup> *Our Knowledge of the External world*, p. 104.

<sup>2</sup> *The Concept of Nature*, p. 14.

realistic account of mind and its place in reality, we need but look at the unambiguous language of Professor Alexander: "For realism, mind has no privileged place in the democracy of things . . . Mind again is a form of time, because the mind-quality emerges out of the time element like all other empirical qualities."<sup>1</sup> Such passages are strongly reminiscent of the favourite tenets of pre-Kantian empiricism. The transcendental method of proof, as is well-known, was intended to bring out the inherent deficiency of a philosophy which sought to construct the house of experience out of a mere flux of ideas destitute of inner necessity or internal determination, and which regarded mind from the psychological point of view as one object among others. In fact, it is no violence to Hume's position to say that his was essentially a philosophy of becoming quite as much as a philosophy of "distinct existences". If he is never tired of insisting that all the particular perceptions "are different, and distinguishable, and separable, from each other, and may be separately considered, and may exist separately, and have no need of anything to support their existence"; he is equally emphatic in his assertion that the different perceptions "succeed

<sup>1</sup> *Space, Time and Deity*, Vol. II, p. 44.

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<sup>1</sup> *Space, Time and Deity, Vol. II, p. 44.*



each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement".<sup>1</sup> As to the dislodgment of mind from its privileged place of autocratic supremacy, Mr. Alexander and his followers are but celebrating, with clearer consciousness, a festival for which an elaborate arrangement was made by the author of the '*Essay concerning Human Understanding*.' Postponing the consideration of these aspects of contemporary thought, we may revert, for a moment, to that realistic dogma which, as suggested above, is the indispensable foundation of every realistic metaphysics.

The  
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entities in  
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realism.

The difficulties which for Hume were insuperable arose ultimately, as we have emphasised above, from his inability to abandon the belief in an unalterable impervious atomic existence. Kant's reply to Hume, as is well known, consisted precisely in pointing out that the connections, far from being external to the atomic existences, entered into their intrinsic nature, that each existence possessed a being not in its self-seclusion and unrelatedness, but in its self-transcendence or relatedness to existences beyond itself. This position has been accepted by many eminent philosophers after Kant. Take any single object, they challenge, and think away all the connections that

<sup>1</sup> *Treatise*, p. 239.

hold between itself and other things, and see if that object does not reduce itself to a non-entity. "The more we remove," says Lotze, "from the conception of Being every thought of a relation, in the affirmation of which it might consist, the more completely the possibility of this distinction (between Being and non-Being) disappears."<sup>1</sup> "To be thus void of relation is just that in which we should find the non-entity of a thing if it was our purpose to define it." Things, that is, do not exist at first in separation from each other so that all connections between them would be mere fortuitous generalizations; on the contrary, their existence has no intelligible meaning except in relation to each other. What we call the real existence of the world is constituted by the various relations, spatial, temporal, causal etc., subsisting between things, and each thing is what it is only through its relations. Green puts the whole position in the most lucid form when he remarks: "Abstract the many relations from the one thing, and there is nothing. They, being many, determine or constitute its definite unity. It is not the case that it first exists in its unity, and then is brought into various relations. Without the relations it would not exist at all".<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Metaphysics*, Vol. 1. p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> *Prolegomena*, § 28,

It is a further consequence of this line of thought that there can be no real entity possessed of an intrinsic nature of its own which is not influenced by the various relations into which that entity may enter. All things are dependent upon other things in so far as their very nature is determined by those mutual relations. The possibility of an unalterable entity entering into different relations would be intelligible only if the being of that entity had not consisted in relations; but once it is admitted that a thing is nothing apart from its relations to other things, the unalterability of an entity in different groups or relations could be maintained only by a manifest inconsistency. But contemporary realism must reject the premise that all relations are internal and recognise that while all things may perhaps be related, many of these relations are not constitutive or determinative; they do not enter into the explanation of the nature or existence of their terms.<sup>1</sup> Thus, for example, the spatial relation between the book and the table is not a constitutive relation, because, as James points out, any book and any table may fall into the relation by their casual situation.

<sup>1</sup> *New Realism*, p. 33.

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The entire controversy, we believe, owes its life to a fatal ambiguity. W. James, as a faithful exponent of the empirical attitude, takes the table and the book as purely sense-given facts, and as the empirical bias is ingrained in common-sense, there is a certain amount of obviousness about his position. The strength of the opposite position, on the other hand, lies in rejecting the suggestion that the table or the book is a mere sense-given fact. The table, it would urge, is not what is presented to mere sense; on the contrary, it is the result of interpretations and so presupposes the relating activity of thought. Consequently, if relations are considered to be extrinsic, then the question inevitably arises: how is it that only a table and a book can fall into this relation and not certain other things? If the relation is a mere coincidence there is no rational ground why this particular thing should fall into relation with that particular thing. In fact, the relation is not casual; it is as much the nature of the table to have the book upon itself as it is the nature of the book to be upon the table, just as it is the nature of the sun to warm the stone, and also the nature of the stone to become warm under the sun. To continue this example of Kant, if the sun sometimes warms the stone and sometimes does not, we should have to say that the sun has changed

its nature; similarly, if the table sometimes supports the book and sometimes does not, we should also grant that the table has undergone a change of nature. It is no objection to say that though the table has the possibility of having the book on itself, yet it would remain what it is even if no books were ever placed upon it. Because then this remark would apply to the sun as well. Both the table and the sun might be defined without reference to the book or the stone, but what is important to observe is that our definitions in such cases are not complete. As our knowledge increases, many of the relations which were formerly supposed to be non-constitutive and non-determinative are found to be intimately bound up with the nature of the things. This evidently indicates the arbitrary nature of the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic relations. "Now that for working purposes," it is rightly remarked by Bradley, "we treat some relations as external merely I do not deny, and that, of course, is not the question at issue here. That question is in short whether this distinction of internal and external is absolute or is but relative, and whether in the end and in principle a mere external relation is possible and forced on us by the facts . . . Every space . . . would be a whole in which the parts throughout

are inter-related already in every possible position, and reciprocally so determine one another. . . . And from this the conclusion cannot be drawn that the terms are inwardly indifferent to their relations; for the whole internal character of the terms, it seems, goes out, on the contrary, and consists in these."<sup>1</sup>

It does not appear to have struck any of the neo-realists that in spite of their emphatic rejection of all mystical metaphysics and adoption of the scientific stand-point, their own procedure implies a theory of reals which can hardly be distinguished from that of, say, Leibnitz and Herbart on the one hand, and of Parmenides on the other. In their zeal against the internality of relations which is considered to be one of the grounds of idealism, they have been led to propound a theory of simple entities which are as indefinable and chimerical as the absolutely exclusive Many of pluralism or the pure Being of mystical universalism. The simple entities, it is urged, may enter into this or that group but they do not belong to it, they depend on no relation, they are the entities at large and belong exclusively to no constituency.<sup>2</sup> As thus described, it is difficult to see how these simple

This truth is missed by contemporary realism, which leads to a difficulty.

<sup>1</sup> *Appearance and Reality*, p. 576.

<sup>2</sup> *New Realism*, p. 129.

entities of the neo-realists differ from the "reals" of Herbart in the enjoyment of pure "position" void of all relations. Like the pure Being of the Eleatic school, each simple entity has a being of its own, "substantial and self-dependent and the difficulty then is to drag it out of this state of ontological seclusion into the region of empirical reality with its thousand relations."<sup>1</sup>

The distinction between relation and dependence does not remove the real difficulty.

These remarks, it may be retorted, do not apply to the realistic conception of the independent simple elements which are not unrelated to one another. All that is claimed is that they do not depend upon those relations and so "it is fundamentally characteristic of neo-realism to distinguish relation and dependence". "Given two entities they will be dependent upon each other only when one is a part of the other or implies the other, or is exclusively determined by a system in which it is cause, effect or implication of the other. In the absence of these relations the entities retain their independence whatever other relations may subsist between them." Now the reply is that this distinction between relation and dependence is after all a matter of arbitrary definition. The question at issue is not whether we should *call* one set of

<sup>1</sup> Lotze, *loc. cit.*

relations as those of dependence and another set of relations as those of independence. The real question is whether there can be any relation between two terms which is so external that it does not affect the terms in any way. It has been said that the bare relation between entities is in the great majority of cases discovered before any dependence is proved. Thus, "things may be together in space, may succeed one another in time, may be different, more, less, whether or not they are whole and part, cause and effect, or implier and implied." This position may be conceded at once, and yet it may be denied that a thing remains what it is whether it is co-existent or successive, more or less, in relation to another thing. In fact, if there had been no fixed rule according to which one event can only succeed but never precede another there would be no consciousness of succession at all. To borrow the well-known example of Kant, had the relation of succession been really external to the nature of the positions of the boat moving down stream, so that the relation would make no difference to the terms, there could be no knowledge of objective succession at all as distinct from co-existence. It is not, therefore, immaterial for the terms which of the possible relations would subsist between them. The relation, far from being extrinsic to



the terms are constitutive, so that the same term in all its concreteness cannot be in different relations.

An idealistic position alone can cope with it.

We are then compelled to conclude that the simple entities of the neo-realists are existences essentially indistinguishable from atomic entities void of all relations. If then neo-realism has to accept the theory of relationless existences, it is subject to those well known criticisms which Parmenides and Leibnitz, Hume and Herbart have received at the hands of the idealists from Plato to Hegel, Lotze or Bradley. And these criticisms are so thorough and convincing that nothing but an ineradicable prejudice can account for the revival of the realistic theory of pure being in contemporary philosophy. The occasional revival, however, of Hume's position in the history of thought in spite of its inherent paradox is a clear proof that atomism represents one of the fundamental attitudes of human mind. Yet, the fact remains that atomism is ultimately untenable; its defects can be removed only by some sort of idealistic interpretation of reality, and the clue to such an interpretation must be found in the recognition of the important rôle of thought in knowledge.

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## CHAPTER III

### **Idealism *versus* Realism**

The root-fallacy of contemporary empirico-realistic systems, as we have maintained in the last chapter, consists in an atomistic bias which is responsible for their sceptical and individualistic tendencies. Abstract individualism, however, ultimately refutes itself, as every system is bound to do when it is based, either consciously or unconsciously, on the fatal omission of the part which thought plays in the building up of knowledge. On the other hand, a philosophical position which has its moorings in thought should by contrast be called universalism or concrete individualism, but these have come to be associated with doctrines that have not always kept within the limits of thought and are thus of doubtful value for an interpretation which knows no other authority than thought or reason.

Conflict-  
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meanings  
of  
'Idealism

Such a position may perhaps be best described as an idealistic interpretation of Reality. But, again, the term idealism, like its opposite, realism, has been used with such

diverse implications that it has led an eminent thinker to complain that these terms have degenerated into traditional battle-cries and are thus no longer fit for use as names of precision. Thus, for instance, Berkeley's philosophy has been supposed on the one hand to be thoroughly realistic in its intention,<sup>1</sup> and, on the other hand, it has been claimed that Reid's realism "might pass into the most extreme idealism."<sup>2</sup> The distinction is, in fact, one of emphasis only, and consequently it is obscured when we attempt to discover a definite basis.

To realise the lack of precision and the resulting difficulties in the conception of this distinction, one need only look at the different *fundamenta divisionis* that have been proposed by different thinkers. Realism, it is sometimes said, must insist on the independence of the objects of experience in general over against the idealistic contention of their dependence on the experiencing mind. More frequently, the distinction is supposed to rest on a more

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Laird, *Berkeley's Realism*, an article in *Mind*, 1916, p. 308—Mr. Laird refers also to Professors Alexander and Dawes Hicks as being among those who have detected the realistic spirit of Berkeley's philosophy.

<sup>2</sup> Bosanquet, *The Essentials of Logic*, p. 10.

restricted basis, namely, the relation between the perceiving mind and the external world revealed in perception. It is this narrower problem which generally comes to the foreground in controversies, and then realism is thought to consist in the assertion that the external world which is before the mind in perception is not dependent on the perceiving subject. This general position again is accepted by different realists with different degrees of qualification, some insisting on the independence of the external world in its existence as well as qualities, others making the qualities dependent on the perceptual context. As thus defined, it is difficult to distinguish realism from that type of idealism which is represented, say, by T. H. Green who urges unambiguously that "the fact that there is a real external world . . . is one which no philosophy disputes."<sup>1</sup>

The demarcation line is sometimes drawn at a different place, and the centre of emphasis is shifted from the external world to the conception of time. Thus, a theory is often called idealistic in so far as it underestimates the temporal aspect of the real world. In this sense idealism has invited criticism generally from

<sup>1</sup> Works, Vol. I, p. 376.

those who feel themselves to be on the sound footing of factual experience only by accepting unreservedly the reality of time and the creative process of the universe as a whole.' Yet, however, there are not only philosophers who, like James Ward, have tried to fit the conception of an epigenetic or creative process into an essentially idealistic framework, but it is one of the basic contentions of the neo-idealist that the universe, which for him is a self-creative energy, is essentially a process, a 'divenire', and this implies, in some form or other, that time is a fundamental feature of the real world.

Finally, the term idealism has been so used as to cover "all those philosophies which agree in maintaining that spiritual values have a determining voice in the ordering of the universe,"<sup>1</sup> or, as A. S. Pringle-Pattison puts it following the Indian philosopher Kapila, spirit is the "*terminus ad quem* of nature."<sup>2</sup> Here, again, the distinctive feature of idealism becomes vague when we remember that even for such an arch-realist as Prof. Alexander the universe is a hierarchy of qualities, or God engaged in process towards

<sup>1</sup> N. K. Smith *Prolegomena to an Idealistic Theory of Knowledge*, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *The Idea of God*, p. 200.

the emergence of deity; and he is never tired of insisting that the universe flowers into deity, that the deity is a new quality above man to which the whole world tends, or that every being has "the nîsus to a higher form in so far as it contributes to the general nîsus of the world."<sup>1</sup>

In view of this prevailing confusion, it may be useful to indicate at the outset the specific sense in which our position may be called idealistic. Now, idealism, as we understand it and shall try to defend here, is the belief or doctrine according to which thought is the medium of the self-expression of Reality; or, to put it from the other side, Reality is such as must necessarily express itself through the ideal or ideals that are organic to the knower's intellectual equipment which may be called thought or reason. Further explication of this position in contrast with the different forms of idealism and realism as these are generally understood will be found at the different stages of our arguments. Meanwhile, it may be clear even from this brief description that the sense in which the term idealism is used in these pages is not entirely opposed to what has the sanction of those philosophers who are traditionally known as the idealists *par excellence*.

A definition of Idealism.

<sup>1</sup> *Space, Time and Deity*, p. 418.

And, in fact, it will be useful, in expounding our position, to make frequent references to the explicit opinions of the idealist on most of the crucial points. Moreover, this position is surely idealistic, if we take the idealistic interpretation of experience to mean an interpretation in which a privileged position is assigned to mind, and as such, distinct from the realistic attitude for which the mind is only one among those many things which exist in the universe, having no privileged place in the democracy of things. The superiority of mind, according to the definition of idealism given here, consists in this that the mind of man is taken to be the organ through which Reality expresses itself ; and if it be conceded that man alone has the capacity to interpret experience in the light of intellectual ideals, then it follows also that it is man alone that can be an organ to Reality, and in this respect, he has a unique position in the economy of the universe. We have so far tried to state in a short and clear form what idealism is ; but, for a greater precision of meaning, it is also necessary to say what it is not .

The term idealism is generally associated in the minds of laymen as well as philosophers with a realistic attitude, with the doctrine which, either overtly or covertly, seeks to

establish that the whole choir of heaven and earth is unreal, or, at least, is not so real as it appears to be to native commonsense. That idealism, somehow or other, detracts from the concrete reality of the universe is the common impression which is responsible for the widespread reaction against idealism in all its forms. And as the tendency of idealism has always been to accentuate the importance of minds in some form or other, it is generally thought that the best method of preserving the reality of all that we care for in life against the damaging interpretations of the idealist, is to place the trifling and insignificant nature of mind beyond all doubt. Now, the first thing which we should make clear in the beginning is that idealism, as we understand it, does not take away in the least the reality of anything which is considered as real by commonsense or science. Far from subtracting anything from the common things of the world, idealism adds to the reality of the things, in so far as it alone makes it clear that things have far other aspects of their life than those which are revealed to commonsense or to science. "Certainly, for myself," it is remarked by Bosanquet, for instance, "if an idealist were to tell me that a chair is really not what we commonly take it to be, but something altogether different,



I should be tempted to reply in language below the dignity of controversy."<sup>1</sup> Similarly, a philosophy must stand self-condemned if it thinks itself competent to establish that the electronic constitution of matter or the inner structure of the material particles are no better than the merest figments of imagination. Even if it comes to be true in the long run that the electrons, like their precursors, namely, ether-vortices and indestructible *plenum*, are nothing really existing in nature, it need not necessarily be the business of philosophy either to justify or to dispute their existence.

Philoso-  
phy and  
science.

This of course does not mean that philosophy *cannot* criticise the categories of the physicist or of commonsense. In fact, there is an important sense in which philosophy is essentially a criticism of such categories. In so far as science is concerned, it would be a purely unwarranted assumption that the hypothetical entities postulated by the man of science can never be merely arbitrary fictions; for, the history of science is itself an emphatic refutation of such an assumption. A scientific category, notwithstanding the prestige it may enjoy in the eyes of the scientists of a particular age, may, for a subsequent age, be a

<sup>1</sup> *Contemporary Philosophy*, p. 5,

fictitious entity. And it is realised to be fictitious in proportion to its failure to fit into the ideal scheme of the world which the scientist carries in his pocket, howsoever unconscious he may be of the fact that he does so. But, nonetheless, philosophy cannot anticipate what particular category of science will ultimately fit into the scheme of a harmonious world, and in this sense he must leave it to the scientist to discover the special nature of the material things.

Again, in so far as the categories of commonsense are concerned, Bosanquet seems to be on the whole right when he says that the scientist's standpoint does not contradict what the chairmaker says about the chair. Even when the chair is found in its ultimate nature to be the stage for the dance of electrons and protons, for instance, that does not contradict the upholsterer's description that it is an article of furniture in a drawing-room. There would be a contradiction only if he had said that the chair is *nothing more* than what is contained in his description, or, again, if he had denied the truth of the scientist's description. Frequently, however, the commonsense description contains a commonsense philosophy; and then it is the business of science or philosophy to put it to the test of systematic thought, and

Philosophy and commonsense.

see whether the commonsense category is right or not.

It may, therefore, be remarked in a general way that philosophy, without taking upon itself the difficult task of discovering the special nature of every thing that exists in the world through a purely "thinking consideration" of things, can reveal, as suggested above, far other aspects of things than what is discoverable by the experimental method of science, or the uncritical method of commonsense. In fact, one of the perennial complaints of the idealists against the realistic interpretation of the world has been that realism takes the things at their "face-value" and so fails to overcome the vice of abstraction and reveal the real world in its full concreteness. Hence, to accuse idealism of replacing the concrete world of commonsense and science by a figment of imagination is, one is compelled to surmise, founded on a serious misconception of the idealistic contentions.

Idealism  
does not  
deny the  
reality of  
matter.

Allied with the above misconception of the true mission of the idealist, there is another which is connected with the problem of the relation between subject and object. Idealism, it is widely supposed, is so-called precisely because it reduces the world of matter to a world of mind-dependent ideas, so that the vast

material world that surrounds us on all sides and which is commonly believed to have existed long before the birth of particular men or perhaps of the human race in general becomes at the hands of the idealist as much dependent upon man's mind as the imaginary world of a drama or fairy-land. If this be the real meaning of idealism, then it is not such a doctrine which we seek to expound in these pages. It is, however, extremely unlikely that any philosopher has seriously attempted to defend such an absurd quixotic opinion, and though Berkeley, of all the idealists, does use language which perilously comes near such a phantastic view, he also gives suggestions of a better type of idealism than what appears on the surface. Of this, however, we shall have to speak in more details later. What needs emphasis at this place is that true idealism has never disputed the real existence of the external world of matter. Thus, as we have noted above, Green says in no uncertain voice: "The fact that there is a real external world of which through feeling we have a determinate experience and that in this experience all our knowledge of nature is implicit, is one which no philosophy disputes" and then it is added, almost in an indignant tone, that "what Mr. Spencer understands by 'idealism,'

is what a raw undergraduate understands by it. It means to him a doctrine that 'there is no such thing as matter,' or that 'the external world is merely the creation of our own minds'—a doctrine expressly rejected by Kant, and which has had no place since his time in any idealism that knows what it is about."<sup>1</sup> It is sufficiently clear from these significant remarks of one of the most prominent idealists of the modern period, that the line of demarcation between idealism and realism cannot be drawn where it is ordinarily drawn even to our own day, and that sometimes by thinkers of repute. Here the extremes might meet in spite of their traditional opposition, and the realist might join hands with the idealist through the transparent barrier created by the popular imagination. That is, there is no difference between the realistic and the idealistic creed, in so far as the reality of the material world is concerned ; for both, there is a real external world which is not the creation of our minds.

Realism  
does not  
see the  
world in  
its fulness.

But, after this meeting-point, their paths diverge ; and the divergence is due to the idealist's belief that reality of the so-called external world has implications which are not

<sup>1</sup> *Works, I., p. 386.*

recognised either by commonsense or by the realist; yet, without them the external world can have no claim to real existence. In this sense, the world, for the idealist, is more real than what it is supposed to be by the realist. The realistic explanation, paradoxical as it may appear to be, does not concede as much reality to the world as it in reality contains. So, far from detracting from the reality of the stupendous material world in space and time, the idealistic explanation posits its reality more emphatically than the realistic assertion; and so far the real world, instead of being levelled down, is in fact levelled up. This is the most important of the idealistic contentions which no one desiring to do justice to the idealistic standpoint can afford to ignore. Yet, it must be admitted that most of the criticisms which are generally levelled against idealism have their source in a vague belief that the world does not get its dues from the idealist, and for this mistaken belief, it must be also admitted in fairness, the idealists are perhaps as much to blame as the realists. If the latter have misinterpreted the idealist's explanations, the reason is not to be found entirely in their unwillingness or deliberate obstinacy to meet the facts squarely; on the contrary, the realists, specially of the open-minded

type, have always tried to appreciate the view-point of the opposite party. It is the expressions and the modes of presentation peculiar to the idealists which are perhaps responsible, to a large extent, for the widespread misunderstanding of their standpoint. The idealists, in general, have a tendency to indulge in certain stock phrases and trite expressions some of which are open to different interpretations ; and hence in spite of their best intentions, they fail to carry conviction with those who begin with the popular suspicion about the idealistic spiriting away of the real world of commonsense and science.

Disadvantages  
of an  
idealistic  
interpretation.

On the other hand, the idealist has peculiar disadvantages of his own. The realistic instinct is so strong with us all, that it requires an extraordinary speculative effort to break loose from its grip ; and even when it melts away with the progressive analysis of experience, we naturally tend back to the standpoint of commonsense realism. In fact, it is perhaps not too much to say that more than three-fourths of the life of the staunchest idealist is spent in the opponent's camp. The difficulty, however, is not peculiar to philosophy. How much of our life, for instance, is guided by the scientist's world-picture ? Even the most distinguished scientist has to lay aside his revolutionising

theory in the practical conduct of life. When we come to the consideration of a speculative truth, it is not simply a question of thinking with the learned and speaking with the vulgar, as Berkeley supposed ; the difficulty is not merely one of language, but of counter-acting our habitual modes of thought. The empirico-realistic bias is ingrained in our habitual ways of thinking and speaking.

The truth of these remarks may be illustrated from Berkeley's philosophy which has historically been the main target for the realist's bullets. This is of course perfectly natural ; for, no realistic interpretation can be reasonably advocated till the hollowness of Berkeley's central thesis—the dependence of being on being known—is thoroughly exposed. What is, however, interesting in the contemporary studies of his philosophy is the extremely divergent directions from which the bullets have come, the consequence being that it has become well-nigh impossible to identify the marks left on the target and thus to detect the camps from which the aims are respectively taken. Thus, there are philosophers according to whom his is the only type of genuine idealism ; but with this common admission the realist proceeds to expose its fallacies, while the idealist hastens to reinforce its arguments. The contentions of

Revival  
of  
interest in  
Berkeley.



Professors Perry and McTaggart respectively may be taken here as examples. It is not, again, always the idealist who thinks highly of Berkeley's achievements. Even the realists vie with the idealists in their feelings towards 'the good Berkeley' for having laid the foundation of a genuine philosophy. Here, again, the attitudes of Prof. Laird and the neo-idealists of Italy may be respectively taken as examples. Finally, it is not, again, always the realist who has detected in Berkeley's philosophy materials for condemnation. Even the idealists join the realists in rejecting his system as a mere subjective idealism which, in the words of Green, is the raw undergraduate's conception of idealism.

Adumbra-  
tion of  
Genuine  
Idealism  
in  
Berkeley's  
Philo-  
sophy.

We have emphasised in the last chapter the realistic assumption of Berkeley's position which makes it essentially incompatible with any form of genuine idealism. It would be, however, doing less than justice to his genius, if we had not noted in his position the germs of true idealism which he was prevented by his atomistic predilection from developing. Berkeley's central doctrine that *esse is percipi*, has, according to his own admission, something of a paradoxical appearance about it. That knowledge presupposes a reality which antedates and postdates the event of knowing, and that

experiencing makes no difference to the existence or quality of the reality experienced, are apparently so obvious facts that a theory which questions these plain facts of commonsense stands almost self-condemned. But the real difficulty of the common-sense position is made prominent only when we have, for the exigencies of analysis, to distinguish between the immediate objects of perception and the real world of things to which knowledge points. The distinctions which even commonsense does not hesitate to make between appearance and reality, the illusory and the real, raise problems of much tougher stuff than what unaided commonsense can satisfactorily solve. Hence, it is one of the repeated warnings of Berkeley that by sensible things, we are to understand those things alone that are perceived immediately by the senses and not those that are mediately known 'by means of' the sensible things. Having clearly realised the difficulties involved in the representative theory of perception and having no other conception of mediation than the reference to a world beyond the possibility of experience, he set to himself the task of exposing the absurdity of allowing to the sensible things an independent existence apart from the perceiving mind. And his main

arguments are directed to show that the objects which vary with the varying contexts of experience cannot be supposed to have an absolute existence, and as mind is the universal element entering into all the contexts, the objects are always in relation to the mind.

There are no doubt other types of arguments which are also pressed into the service of his spiritualistic thesis, and then instead of restricting himself to showing the conditioned nature of the sensible things he appears to argue that the world of things cannot exist in the intervals of perception by a mind, either finite or divine. We shall consider the latter position in the next chapter. All that may be observed here is that in so far as he identifies the sensible things with the real world, it is, we believe, an extremely untenable position, and in this respect all the arguments of the realists against the mentalistic doctrines are unanswerable. What is, however, indispensable for appreciating the position of Berkeley is that by distinguishing the immediate objects of perception from all that is known mediately, he, like his predecessor Locke, raised an important problem which is not as easy of solution as it is generally supposed to be. And the difficulties involved in the problem are sufficiently evident from the modern controversy on the nature of sense data. Into

this controversy, however, it would be hardly relevant to enter here. It is enough to remember that there is still a group of eminent thinkers for whom the immediate objects of perception are events in the mental history of the individual, and not independent entities of the physical world.

It is, however, well known that Berkeley omitted, in the later editions of his works, the particular passage in which he had explicitly identified sensations with objects. This shows clearly that he did not think this identification to be essentially connected with his central doctrine. What then remains of his position as thus truncated is given at the beginning of his work, namely, the world is my idea. Now, to appreciate this apparently paradoxical doctrine, we must make a few observations on the meaning of 'idea'.

How we perceive external objects, Reid points out,<sup>1</sup> is a difficult problem with many ancient and modern philosophers. Plato's illustration of men bound to a dark subterranean cave and knowing only the shadows of reality gave rise to this problem. These shadows of Plato represent the species and phantasms of the Peripatetic school, and the

What is  
an idea?  
Its popular  
meaning.

<sup>1</sup> *Works*, Hamilton's edition, Vol. I, p. 262.

ideas and impressions of modern philosophers. Descartes, while rejecting only a part of the Peripatetic system—namely, that images come from the external objects, adopted the other part—that the external object itself is not perceived. For this adoption, however, Reid contends, Descartes does not give reasons. All philosophers from Plato to Hume agree that we do not perceive external objects immediately. It is owing to this “original defect” that the “ideal system” leads to scepticism. Our analysis, therefore, must discard that doctrine, and should be inspired by the belief that our knowledge involves from the very beginning certain “judgments of nature—judgments not got by comparing ideas and perceiving agreements and disagreements, but immediately inspired by our constitution.” This, as explained by A. Seth, means that “we do not have sensation first, and refer them afterwards to a subject and an object; our first having of a sensation is at the same time the knowledge of a present object and of that object as somehow related to me.”<sup>1</sup>

It is not our present purpose to enquire how far Reid is justified in assimilating Plato's view on our knowledge of the external world to that

<sup>1</sup> *Scottish Philosophy*, p. 78.

of Hume, or why Kant's speculations about the external world did not lead to scepticism in spite of the fact that he never questioned, as has been sometimes maintained,<sup>1</sup> the fundamental assumption of the "ideal system." All we can do here is simply to remember that it is possible in the one case to think that Plato "does not volatilise, so to speak, our world of facts and externality, but accepting for it all that it claims of existence and reality, then passes on to interpret its conditions, and assigns its significance more profoundly."<sup>2</sup> And in the other case, it is equally possible so to interpret Kant's thoughts as to distinguish them from the false view of idealism according to which the external world is merely the creation of our own minds—"a doctrine expressly rejected by Kant and which has had no place since his time in any idealism that knows what it is about."<sup>3</sup>

It must be however admitted that the idealistic contention that the world is my idea is extremely liable to misinterpretation, owing to the association the term "idea" has acquired in our minds. By an idea we ordinarily mean a mental picture, a representation or copy

<sup>1</sup> A. Seth : *Ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> Bosanquet : *Contemporary Philosophy*, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Green : *Works*, I, p. 386.

of a thing outside the mind. As thus understood, it is manifestly absurd to reduce the outside thing to the idea; we should rather think the thing to be the antecedent condition of the idea. We may go further and admit that the difficulty in this case arises to a large extent from the conditions of our discursive thought which understands by division, and defines by exclusion. Owing to this dichotomous intellect we have to make our notion of 'idea' definite only by contrasting it with what is *not* an idea; and evidently the most natural candidate for such a contrast is the ideatum or the thing which the idea is said to represent. That is, the ideas have for adult consciousness a reference beyond themselves to something non-mental in contradistinction from which they are defined. Hence the realist has always the advantage of this popular distinction whenever the idealist speaks of the world as my idea; and in spite of the indignant protest of the latter that he should be so grossly misunderstood, the former continues to consider idealism to be a doctrine which somehow or other, attempts to spin the world of reality out of psychical existences. At this stage, physiology intervenes to put upon the popular meaning its seal of scientific authority.

The Physiological theory of Idea.

Ideas are frequently described in the 'ideal system' as mental or mind-dependent appearances. But have we any scientific basis for calling them mental? This question, it has been urged, drives the subjective idealist to a quandary; for, "he can only prove things perceived to be subjective by proving them to be externally related to objects as their mechanical effects, and yet this can only be done by simultaneously interpreting the things perceived in a manner which the realist standpoint can alone justify."<sup>1</sup> This contention may in fact be substantiated by profuse quotations from the works of the mentalists. When Descartes, for instance, holds that there is no other difference between the mind and its ideas than between a piece of wax and the diverse figures which it can receive, it is difficult to believe that his theory of idea is not influenced by the mechanical standpoint. A similar remark holds good of Locke's new way of ideas. Strangely enough, even Hume frequently talks of external objects "becoming known to us only by those perceptions they occasion." And when we come to Kant, it is found that he too has very often

<sup>1</sup> N. K. Smith, *Prolegomena to an Idealistic Theory of Knowledge*, p. 53. Compare also his *Commentary to Kant*, p. 587.



the appearance of taking for granted that the ideas are purely mental existences.

The view  
of Des-  
cartes on  
idea.

But this fact, we venture to suggest, should not blind us to another aspect of the theory of idea which was coming into prominence in the development of the theory. The term idea, in fact, has been left in a hopeless state of confusion; and the confusion was started by Descartes by his distinction between the *esse formale seu proprium* of an idea and its *esse objectivum seu vicarium*. In the latter aspect, which is the really epistemological aspect, an idea is not a mere psychical event. It is rather whatever the mind contemplates as an object; or, to put it in the language of modern idealism, it is whatever exists for a self. It has been rightly contended that "Descartes means by 'idea' what we call the content of any apprehension."<sup>1</sup> As thus interpreted, there does not seem to be any distinction between idea and phenomenon, in so far as both the terms signify nothing more than this that every object is related to a self for which it exists. This, of course, does not mean that the object is a state of consciousness or a mental event produced by the external stimulus.

<sup>1</sup> Adamson, *Modern Philosophy* p. 40, also p. 36. Adamson also interprets the term as used by Locke in the same sense; see p. 113.

The view  
of Locke.

The better meaning of the term idea comes to a clearer prominence in Locke who makes it stand for "whatever is the *object* of the understanding when a man thinks." But he was too much carried away by the apparent simplicity of the mechanical standpoint, and also perhaps too much disgusted at the facile manner in which the theory of innate ideas sought to dispense with the need for sense-experience, to see the essential incompatibility of his psychological method with the epistemological standpoint from which he happened to define 'idea'. The result is that his philosophy in general appears to be influenced by the physiological standpoint alone. Yet, it will only propagate confusion if we forget Green's remark that "physiology will not answer the question that Locke asked;" so to those who think that the merit of his theory of idea consisted in its physiological basis, "we can but respectfully point out that they have not come in sight of the problem which Locke and his followers, on however false a method sought to solve; . . . The question really at issue is not between two co-ordinate sciences, as if a theory of the human body were claiming also to be a theory of the human soul, and theory of the soul were resisting the aggression. The question is whether the conceptions which all the

departmental sciences alike presuppose shall have an account given of them or no. . . . The physiologist, when he claims that his science should supersede metaphysic . . . accounts for the formal conceptions in question, in other words, for thought as it is common to all the sciences, as sequent upon the antecedent facts which his science ascertains—the facts of the animal organisation. But these conceptions . . . are necessary to constitute the facts.”<sup>1</sup> Green’s contention is perhaps put in a clearer form by Professor Aliotta. “It is impossible,” he says, “to conceive of the physiological organism without making use of those intuitive forms and categories which are supposed to be deduced therefrom, and it therefore presumes the laws of thought and the activity of the knowing subject.”<sup>2</sup>

The view  
of Hume.

Similarly Hume notwithstanding his occasional lapses, does not fail to remind his readers that “when the mind looks further than what immediately appears to it, its conclusions can never be put to the account of the senses,” nor is it possible that our reason “ever should, upon any supposition, give us assurance of the continued and distinct exis-

<sup>1</sup> *Works*, I, pp. 164-165.

<sup>2</sup> *The Idealistic Reaction against Science*, p. 15.

tence of body." In fact, neither Locke nor Hume could seriously accept the physiological theory of sensation.<sup>1</sup> Their problem being to explain how our belief in the external thing grows out of the immediately given sense-data, it was not open to them to start with that belief and explain the sense-data as the effect of external things. So it has been emphatically maintained<sup>2</sup> that in this respect, "Hume is as much a Berkeleioian as Berkeley himself, and they effectually exclude any reference to body from those original impressions, by reference to which all other modes of consciousness are to be explained." It must be however admitted that the real problem raised by the mentalists is never kept clear of the confusion arising

<sup>1</sup> The problems arising out of Locke's 'new way of ideas' could not be solved by physiology. No critic who does not see this is in a position to do justice to the subjective idealists. Yet, the mistake has been very common among the exponents and the critics of the theory of ideas. Cf. Broad, *Scientific Thought* pp. 256, 510; and Bergson, *Mind Energy*, p. 196.

<sup>2</sup> Green: *Works*, I. p. 163. It is true that Hume's restricted use of the term 'idea' was, as pointed out by J. Ward (*Psychological Principles*, p. 46) a retrograde step; yet, in excluding any reference to body from the original impressions, he was unquestionably truer to the 'new way of ideas' than its author.

from the physiological theory ; in so far as this is the case, Mr. Smith's observations are entirely justified. But what we contend for is that their confusions on this head were due to the difficulty of keeping consistently to a standpoint which was so novel even for themselves that their language very often lagged behind their thought.

The view  
of Kant.

In so far as Kant is concerned, it will perhaps be conceded by all, at this late hour of the day, that the assumption of the psychological standpoint is not only not indispensable for establishing his main contentions, but that Kant very explicitly dissociates the problem of origin of appearances from his arguments. The tentative character of his analysis in the *Aesthetic* where alone the physiological standpoint is prominent has been recognised by all sympathetic exponents of Kant, and the method of proceeding upon assumptions which are to be later modified was, as Caird points out, characteristic of his analysis, which has the Socratic advantage of gradually leading the reader on from his own ground to the point it was desired to bring him. As thus regarded, the doctrine of the thing-in-itself should not be construed as supporting the mechanical view according to which the sense-appearances are merely affections of the mind, states of

consciousness caused by something beyond consciousness and arranged in accordance with certain forms of the knowing mind. It is true that Kant does refer the external world to some thing incognizable in itself; but it must be remembered that this is not the same view which the physiologist teaches us about the origin of the sensations. The Thing-in-itself is rather the supersensible ground of the phenomenal world, and so Kant is careful to point out that the word cause is ambiguous. "The word *cause*, when applied to the supersensible, signifies merely the *ground* which determines the causality of things to an effect in accordance with the laws of nature; and while the possibility of causality in this sense cannot be understood, it can be conclusively shown that it is not self-contradictory, as some have maintained it to be."<sup>1</sup> The physical stimulus as conceived by the physiologist is something existing in space having a determinate relation to the sensibility; the Thing-in-itself on the contrary is not in space or time, and we have here Kant's own emphatic repudiation. 'It is' he says, "an altogether mistaken idea of the theory of sense-objects as mere phenomena,

<sup>1</sup> *The Philosophy of Kant*, selected by John Watson, p. 320.

to which we must add something non-sensuous, if one imagines, or tries to make others imagine, this to mean the supersensuous substratum of matter is divided into monads (or parts) as we divide matter itself; for in this case the monad (which is merely the idea of an unconditioned condition of the compound) would be regarded as in space; when it ceases to be a noumenon, and is itself compound.”<sup>1</sup> We must therefore once for all give up the practice of reading the physiological theory of the origin of sense-impressions into the Kantian doctrine, and while talking of the raw material of sense-impressions in connection with the Kantian system, it should be remembered that these impressions are not the mechanical effects of the things-in-themselves on the animal sentience.

In spite of the warnings of the more sympathetic exponents, however, all the philosophers from Descartes to Kant are frequently thought to have committed themselves to the physiological view. In fact, the better aspect of their epistemological theories has been so much

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Adamson, *Philosophy of Kant*, p. 78.

Adamson observes that “it is worth while noticing that all the conclusions from the physiology of the senses, which Lange regards as furnishing confirmation of the Kantian criticism lie entirely beyond and without its sphere.”—p. 23.’

overshadowed by the physiological theory of the origin of sensations, which sometimes comes to prominence with more or less definiteness in their analysis of knowledge, that the major part of the criticism of their philosophical views is generally directed against the so-called productive theory of the sense-data. This, we are led to believe, is responsible for the widespread failure to appreciate the real nature of the contributions they made to the solution of one of the most important and far-reaching problems of philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

In the light of the above explanation of the term idea, it may now be easy to appreciate the truth which the advocates of the "ideal system", notwithstanding their short-comings and even manifest inconsistencies, were seeking to express and thus preparing the ground for a truer type of idealism of a later age. The "idea", according to the better aspect of their theories, is not simply a psychical occurrence or a mode of consciousness produced by an external stimulus; it is rather the meaning, the content, or better still, things in so

The philosophical meaning of "idea."

<sup>1</sup>Mr. R. M. Eaton's remarks may be cited here in illustration of the widespread failure:—"Cartesianism here rubs elbows with the idealism of Berkeley, who pursues Locke's way of ideas to its conclusion in affirming that ideas, and the spirits that produce them, are sole realities"—*Descartes*, p. xxix,



far as they are thought or contemplated by the mind. The scholastic distinction of the "formal reality" from the "objective reality" of the ideas, which Descartes adopts unhesitatingly is not then an unfortunate departure from the critical path of philosophy of which a modern idealist or realist should fight shy. The distinction, when properly understood, is a valuable achievement of critical thought in the sphere of knowledge. That Locke too, in spite of his scornful rejection of the suggestion that ideas could ever be seriously taken to be real substances, could not abandon the Cartesian distinction is rightly seen by Professor Gibson who, following Adamson, may well claim the credit of having done a greater justice to the new theory of ideas than what it had received at the hands of Green and others. In Locke's actual treatment of ideas, it is rightly remarked, "it is implied throughout that ideas possess both aspects, although they are not always equally prominent, and confusion is apt to result from the want of a clear definition of standpoint. The idea for him is at once the apprehension of a content and the content apprehended; it is both a psychical existent and a logical meaning." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Locke's *Theory of Knowledge*, p. 19.

We must now turn to the contributions which Berkeley made to the genuine type of idealism. These, we believe, are contained in his central formula, namely, that the *esse* of things is *percipi*, with its implication that things as objects are ideas. That "the *objects* of human knowledge" are "ideas", he starts by emphasising, "is evident to any one" who would like to take a survey of them. And it is significant that this admission does not prevent him from remarking: "That the colours are really in the tulip which I see is manifest. Neither can it be denied that this tulip may exist independent of your mind or mine;" he finds "an evident contradiction", not in the independent existence of the tulip, but only in the supposition that "any immediate object of the senses that is, any idea, or combination of ideas—should exist in an unthinking substance, or exterior to all minds."<sup>1</sup>

It is needless to explain again what we have already made sufficiently clear. It is evident from these and many similar passages that Berkeley, despite his occasional confusion, meant by an idea, not a psychological event, but an object or a thing as it exists for the mind that perceives it. Mr. Laird then, we believe, is entirely right in so far as he remarks, in the article to

<sup>1</sup> Fraser's *Selections from Berkeley*, p. 147.

which we have already referred, that "if sensible things are in the mind *only* in the sense that they are the direct objects of mind, it would be hard to look for a fuller measure of agreement" between the theory of Berkeley and that of neo-realism, though these two theories are "widely separated in time and in form of expression." Again, Mr. Laird may find not only Berkeley but a good number of idealists following him closely when he explains the meaning of 'independence' as independence of "the object of a cognitive act" of that act, so that the object is "given to it and not made by it." No idealist who knows his business will, we believe, care for defending the position that the object of perception is created in the process of perception. It is, therefore, nothing more than an unfortunate confusion of thought when Mr. Laird, following the general misconception of the realists, proceeds elsewhere to remark that the main assumption of realism is that things can be known as they really are, and that "the object of true knowledge is in a certain sense independent of our knowing of it," while, on the other hand, all idealists, "inspite of their differences, dispute this independence of the objects of knowledge."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *A Study in Realism*, p. 8.

The root-fallacy of contemporary realism, which it shares with Berkeley's idealism, as we have urged above, does not consist in its insistence on the independence of the objects as it conceives them, *i.e.*, as things which are not created in the act of knowledge; it rather lies in its failure to realise the function of thought in knowledge. And here Berkeley has at least the merit of seeing the defect of his earlier analysis. In *Siris*, therefore, he not only calls the objects of sense *phenomena*, instead of *ideas* or *sensations*, but goes on to make the well-known observation: "We know a thing when we understand it when we can interpret or tell what it signifies. Strictly, the sense knows nothing. We perceive indeed sounds by hearing, and characters by sight. But we are not therefore said to understand them. After the same manner, the phenomena of nature are alike visible to all: but all have not alike learned the connexion of natural things, or understand what they signify, or know how to vaticinate by them." <sup>1</sup> The connection of natural things, as Berkeley sees here clearly, is not given through sense, and in this respect, we believe, Berkeley has a truer insight than the neo-realists, for, as we hope to prove at a later stage, the so-called

The superiority of Berkeley's position to that of neo-realism.

<sup>1</sup> Fraser's *Selections*, p. 296.

sensible things are not purely sense-given facts; they presuppose connections that are not themselves sense-given. Berkeley saw this clearly even in the *Principles* in so far as he insisted on the *order* of nature which he took to have been divinely established.

Problem  
arising  
out of the  
distinction  
between  
content  
and thing.

We have so far insisted on the real significance of the term idea as used by the advocates of the "ideal system", and have tried to show that there is an essential agreement between idealism and realism in respect of their theories on the status of the world in relation to the knowing mind. Here, however, arises a deeper problem which has been the source of a heated controversy since the time of Descartes. Granted that an idea is a thing as it exists for the mind; but this, it has been frequently urged, does not tell us definitely what the status of the thing is when it *does not exist for the mind that knows it*. An idea as the content of knowledge, though it may be different from the act of knowledge, does not exist except for the mind; on the other hand, a thing for the realistic position does exist even when it does not exist for the mind. This is perhaps the most vital contrast between the two positions, and the controversy was started even in the Cartesian School with Malebranche on the one side, and Arnauld on the other. The contro-

versy has been revived in contemporary philosophy with renewed vigour and still remains as an undecided issue. The main question is whether the idea is not something like a *tertium quid* coming between the thing and the mind, possessing, as Mr. Alexander puts it aptly, a twilight existence between the things they represent and the mind which understands them. All idealists, it is widely supposed, must, in some form or other, accept the doctrine that the being of things is dependent on their being known, and so far Berkeley's is the only type of idealism.

✓ That the so-called objective idealism has a common basis with the subjective idealism of Berkeley has been emphatically maintained even by such an accomplished thinker as A. Seth Pringle-Pattison. The fundamental argument on which Berkeley's idealism is based, it is said<sup>1</sup> "remains the same in those transcendental theories which endeavour to avoid the private or individualistic character of Berkeley's doctrine by bringing in an All-Knower to maintain in existence the world of objects which we recognize in common, and which we usually think of as existing quite irrespective of whether they are known or not known." Now, it must be candidly admitted that if we isolate some of the main conclusions of the doctrine

<sup>1</sup> *The Idea of God*, p. 191.

known as objective idealism, there seems to be ample justification for the remark that the transcendental idealism "is just Berkeleian idealism *in excelsis*"; and regarded in this light, the only difference between these two types of idealism seems to be that the one is simply the other universalised and applied on the cosmic scale. But, to think further that the reasoning is the same in both cases is, we submit, to do scanty justice to the transcendentalist's standpoint. On the contrary, all the idealists beginning with Kant onward have emphatically dissociated themselves from Berkeley; and when we come to Green, the language in which the difference is accentuated verges almost on the contemptuous. Moreover, Kant himself is a fairly clear example to prove that an idealist who repudiates Berkeleianism need not necessarily commit himself to a doctrine of the All-Knower; and so this doctrine, we contend, is not vitally connected with the repudiation of the private and individualistic character of Berkeley's philosophy even in those systems where the All-Knower figures prominently. For a more detailed proof of this contention, we may turn for a while to the philosophy of T. H. Green, one of the most prominent advocates of the All-Knower doctrine, whose influence on the subsequent history of idealism is admittedly great.

## CHAPTER IV

### The Philosophy of T. H. Green.

In view of the manifold aspects of Green's thoughts and the different types of criticism to which his philosophy has been subjected, it may conduce to clearness if we begin with an initial statement of those portions of his philosophy which are less open to misinterpretation, and then proceed to the more debatable aspects. As often happens in all controversial topics, the prejudice created by one aspect of a philosopher's thought has a tendency to prevent the critic from appreciating the profounder and more abiding truths expressed in the other portions. The more useful method of presenting his thought is, therefore, to keep aside all topics which may prejudice the reader's mind long before he has opportunities for respecting the philosopher's critical acuteness and candour. Now, the first thing which we should like to emphasise in Green's analysis of knowledge is his concessions to the realistic position. Lotze has somewhere remarked that the best interest of the idealist can be well

Green's  
Conces-  
sion to  
Realism



served only when he begins his analysis as a realist. This is a remark which is perhaps nowhere more applicable than to Green's position. He begins with an emphatic repudiation of the doctrine that 'there is no such thing as matter,' or that 'the external world is merely the creation of our own minds.'<sup>1</sup> A true idealist, for Green, does not dispute the realist's belief that there is a real world quite independent of the fact that somebody happens to know it. Experience makes no difference to the real world. "It is quite true," he says, "that . . . the object-matters of our knowledge do not come into being with the experience which I or any one may happen to have of them"; we cannot "suppose consciousness with its world to come into existence over and over again as this man or that becomes conscious."<sup>2</sup> It is impossible to conceive how a greater concession can be given to the realistic position which rightly insists that knowledge presupposes, and does not create, its objects. Green too urges almost in the same language: "The object, for instance, may be known . . . as matter, but it is only so known in virtue of . . . a manifestation of

<sup>1</sup> *Works*, I, p. 386.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 487.

itself . . . . ”<sup>1</sup> The object is an object only “in virtue of the manifestation.” Hence matter and motion, for instance, exist there whether we know them or not ; they are only manifested, not created, in being known.

It is clear from this unambiguously expressed opinion of Green that he fully recognised the truth of the realistic contention that knowledge reveals but does not construct its objects. “It is obvious that the facts of the world do not come into existence when this or that person becomes acquainted with them ”<sup>2</sup> ; and if Berkeley denied such an obvious fact, this was due to his false method of approaching experience which for him, as also for the sô-called empiricists in general, is nothing more than “a sequence of impressions, each qualified by residua of those which have preceded it.”<sup>3</sup> But experience in the true sense of the term is “the connected consciousness of the world of facts” ; and “it is for lack of ” this distinction between these two senses of the term that “the controversy between ‘experimentalists ’ and their opponents has described so tedious a circle, entanglement in which is the sure mark of a philosopher

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 387.

<sup>2</sup> *Prolegomena*, p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> *Works*, I. p. 460.

who does not understand his business." In fact, Berkeley's early idealism "was merely a cruder form of Hume's." And unless "this doctrine was to efface 'spirit' as well as 'matter,' he must modify it by the admission of a 'thing' that was not an 'idea,' and of which the '*esse*' was *percipere* not *percipi*."¹

It need hardly be pointed out that so far there is absolutely no difference between the realist's attacks against Berkeley and those of the arch-idealist Green. Green at least would have no scruples in admitting with Alexander that the things do not "owe their *esse* to their *percipi*."² and that "just as the silver must exist before it can be used as a shilling and impressed with the king's effigy," so the thing must exist before it can be known by the mind. It is only when the idealist undertakes a further analysis of the process of knowledge that the divergence between realism and idealism emerges for the first time. Yet here, as we shall try to show below, much of the controversy is due to the use of ambiguous language and not to any essential difference in thought; and the idealistic analysis, we believe, can be so restated in terms of a realistic philosophy as

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

*Space, Time and Deity*, II, p. 95.

to mitigate in a considerable measure the contrast which is generally supposed to exist between idealism and realism. By this, however, we do not mean to suggest that there is absolutely no difference between the two historically opposed schools of thought, or that the history of the controversy between idealism and realism has been merely a history of how eminent thinkers have misunderstood each other. On the contrary, it will be our aim to throw into a clearer relief the fundamental difference of principles which perhaps cannot be solved to the satisfaction of both. But, we are persuaded to believe, the realist as a rule entertains something like a prejudice against any interpretation which professes to be idealistic, and so seeks to fight shy of everything that is uttered by the idealist in relation to the knowledge situation. The consequence is that their paths seem to diverge much earlier than they would have done if they had waited to try for a better understanding of each other. To this further analysis then we must now address ourselves.

The question, says Green, "which Hume bequeathed to such of his successors as could read him aright" may best be approached with the formula, 'How is knowledge possible?' When it is said in reply to the question that "we have been taught most of it, but that

The  
Problem,  
ignored  
by  
Realists.

ultimately, as our best psychologists teach, it results from the production of feeling in us by the external world and the registration of feeling in experience," then "it may seem strange to be told that no disciple of Kant or Hegel, who knows what he is about, would dispute the truth of the above answer, but only its sufficiency. The fact that there is a real external world of which through feeling we have a determinate experience, and that in this experience all our knowledge of nature is implicit, is one which no philosophy disputes. The idealist merely asks for a further analysis of a fact which he finds so far from simple."<sup>1</sup> It is not enough to say that "we know because something makes us know, for, the 'something' is determined as a 'world' as 'real,' and as 'external,' and as in some way reflecting itself in our experience." Hence to say that it is useless to explain the possibility of knowledge and then to take everything at 'its face-value' is, according to Green, to avoid the question of knowledge altogether. Whether we think of the world as being either a 'block universe' or as essentially a creative process, whether it be nothing better than the stage for the mad dance of electrons or a never-ceasing flux of chaotic

<sup>1</sup> *Works*, I, p. 376.

sense-data, whether it be a series of qualities emerging successively from the space-time matrix or simply the indeterminate and unforeseeable outburst of an *elan vital*, the question requiring an answer is—"What are the conditions implied in the existence of such an object?" Now, our first impulse in answer to this question is to say that it is, if we may so put it, a question-begging problem; for, it assumes the exact point at issue, namely, that there are certain conditions on which the existence of the things depends, whereas the realist's contention is that there is no such condition at all. The things are out there, self-existent and unconditioned, and so to raise an impossible question is to forfeit the right to an answer. But in reality the question cannot be thus summarily dismissed. For, even if it be granted that the things "had an existence in *themselves*, or otherwise than as related to a consciousness, it would still not be by *such* . . . (things, but by the things) which we know," that the possibility of existence has to be explained. "Nothing can be known by help of reference to the unknown."<sup>1</sup>

The question, which of course is the old Kantian question, raised by Green requires a

Meaning  
of  
Phenomenon.

<sup>1</sup> *Prolegomena*, p. 13.

little explanation in view of the misinterpretations to which it is obviously open. It is evidently not the question whether the things are independent of the knowing mind; that they are so has been already admitted. But to grant that the things are independent of the persons who happen to know them is not to commit oneself to the admission that the things are absolutely unconditioned. An absolutely unconditioned thing would be just the Kantian thing-in-itself of which nothing can be said, and which therefore cannot be appealed to in explanation of anything. The physical stimulus that is supposed to cause the sensations, the space-time matrix, the *elan vital*, the law of gravitation, ether and electrons—none of these can be properly called a thing-in-itself, though all of them are surely independent existences, in the sense that they had existed even when nobody experienced them. In this sense all that we can ever know as existing is an idea or a phenomenon as distinct from what is not knowable at all. That is, though the things we know do not depend for their existence on the fact that somebody knows them, and so in this sense they are independent of the knowing mind, yet, all the determinations of the things are discovered only in the knowledge relation, so that the things which are referred to

in our explanations of the facts are necessarily determined in certain specific ways.

It is of course a different question whether the things are really determined in those ways in which we have so far determined them ; but this does not affect the truth of the assertion that we have to determine them in certain specific ways in so far as they are referred to in explaining facts. Thus, for instance, in explaining a sensation as the effect of the physical stimulus on the animal sentience, we have necessarily to determine the stimulus as a cause standing in a specific spatio-temporal relation to the animal, and apart from this determination it would be impossible to refer to the stimulus for explaining the sensation. Hence to insist that we can know only phenomena is not to degrade the things into mind-dependent appearances ; it is merely to indicate that things are what we know them to be. And we know them only by bringing them into relation to things other than themselves, and it follows consequently that to refer a fact to a thing-in-itself that cannot be determined in any way is to admit that the fact cannot be explained at all. This explains the repeated warnings of Green that we should not confuse the assertion that things are independent of the knower's experience at a particular time



with the other assertion that things are external to consciousness.

Otherness  
and  
Exter-  
nality.

With this explanation of the idealistic common-place that all we can ever know is an idea or a phenomenon, we must return once more to Green's statement of the difference between idealism and realism. Commonsense, he points out, is "rightly persuaded that real things are other than any feelings of ours or any judgments we may form about them<sup>1</sup>"; it is further true in holding that "the world which we know" is surely not "one which begins and ends with the birth and death of individual man."<sup>2</sup> So far the realist's belief is never questioned by true idealism. The real difference between realism and idealism consists in this that while the former identifies 'otherness' with 'externality,' the latter insists on their difference. This is perhaps the clearest as well as the briefest expression of Green's opinion on the vital question of realism *versus* idealism; but unfortunately it has been thrown into the background in contemporary controversy, and then realism busies itself with exposing the fallacy of what is never accepted by a true idealist, and idealism exerts itself to defend what cannot survive the realist's re-

<sup>1</sup> *Works, I, p. 498.*

<sup>2</sup> *Works, II, p. 183.*

peated attacks. But nothing can be gained by such irrelevant disputes, and to philosophise would be to undertake a wild-goose chase when abundant dialectical weapons are arrayed on both sides over something that is not in dispute. Let us then try to see how far the idealistic distinction between otherness and externality is valid.

A thing, it is pointed out, may be external to another thing, but nothing can be external to consciousness; or, as it is also sometimes put, externality is one of the relations whereby consciousness connects its objects and so nothing can be external to consciousness. Such expressions are found in abundance in the writings of Green; and if not rightly interpreted, they seem to be in flagrant contradiction with his other expressions that the world of objects is independent of the individual experience and that the objective things are not affected by the birth and death of individual man. But these two sets of expressions, Green suggests, are not difficult of reconciliation. We must quote at this place, in view of the misunderstanding to which Green's arguments are liable, the entire passage in which he puts his position briefly. "An object, in fact, is always a relation, or congeries of relations, and consciousness is the only medium in which relations exist for us.

An apparent contradiction.

Whether they can exist otherwise is as idle a question as whether plants could grow without an atmosphere. It is quite true that the relations which form the object-matter of our knowledge do not come into being with the experience which I or any one may happen to have of them, but on the other hand, except as relations of what is relative to consciousness, they are simply nothing ; nor unless we suppose consciousness with its world to come into existence over and over again as this man or that becomes conscious, is there any difficulty in reconciling these two propositions. We are apt to speak of the world as reflecting itself in the mirror of consciousness, and the metaphor misleads us into imagining an existence of the world, apart from the reflection. We forget that while the mirrored object is related to our senses in many other ways than through its reflection in the mirror, it is only through consciousness that the world exists for us at all. Even the ' thing-in-itself,' on examination, turns out to be simply a name for the unity of relation subsisting between all objects as a result of their being taken into the unity of consciousness ; in other words, of their becoming objects."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Works I.*, p. 487.

This passage may be interpreted in two different ways. Of these the more obvious interpretation is that an object, according to Green, is essentially related to consciousness and so has no existence or reduces itself to nothing when it is not related to consciousness. Consciousness, therefore, and the object are organically related with each other. As Green himself observes: "I do not admit that the relation of object to subject is truly described by saying that the object or non-ego is independent of, or external to, the subject or ego. I hold that the object has no real existence apart from the subject any more than the subject apart from the object."<sup>1</sup> It is added in another context that, according to his doctrine, the external matter of the exact sciences is "unaffected," "except that 'externality' has to be understood as of *matter to matter*, not of matter to thought, 'matter' and 'externality' alike meaning certain relations which thought constitutes."<sup>2</sup> And so though it is true that "the whole system of nature" is something other than thought," yet, "relation to thought makes it what it is," and consequently, "but for thought it would not be."

If, however, this has to be regarded as the right interpretation of Green's ultimate position,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 522.

<sup>2</sup> *Works II.*, p. 181.

then the realistic tendencies of his writings must necessarily be condemned as nothing more than a half-hearted concession to the common-sense view-point. We suppose, however, that Green was not really half-hearted, though his expressions are not always felicitous. Except on this supposition, one must admit that Green was concealing a difficulty which he saw but could not solve ; but in that case, we believe, he would not have made a deliberate attempt to reconcile his view with the common-sense standpoint.

What then is the true position of Green in respect of the realistic belief in an independent world of things ? He is emphatic on one point ; and it is this that the " universe " is not " the creation of my own mind " ; this is impossible, for, " I only began to think twenty-five years ago " ;<sup>1</sup> and so it would be absurd to suppose that the universe comes into being " with the experience which I or any one may happen to have " of it. But, Green contends, it does not follow from this that the universe has a *meaning* except when it is within someone's experience. A universe that does not reveal itself to our thought, or which has no possibility of revealing itself in our experience, is only the unknowable thing-in-itself which is

<sup>1</sup> *Loc. cit.*

ultimately a contradiction in terms. But there is much in the universe which is yet unknown and unrevealed ; from this it does not follow that it does not exist, though it does follow that its existence has no meaning *for us*. Hence, as Green points out, "consciousness is the only medium" in which the universe exists *for us*. As plants cannot grow without an atmosphere, so the universe, except as revealed in, or related to, consciousness, reduces itself to a mere "nothing"; "it is only through consciousness that the world exists for us at all," though, of course, it is not "created by us."

Green's entire merit, we submit, consists in thus reconciling the essential position of idealism with realism, though his language, as we have admitted, admits of two conflicting interpretations ; and we may perhaps go further and admit that Green has sometimes argued, forgetting the other side of his position, that the universe does not exist at all when it is "outside the thinking consciousness." And in so far as he does so, he makes himself liable to the fallacy of ego-centric predicament. But a sympathetic view of a metaphysical position should not emphasise the slips of language and thought, and then it will be clear that what Green *means* to convey to his readers is that though the object-matters of our knowledge are

Green  
tried to  
mediate  
between  
idealism  
and  
realism.

not so dependent on our experience that they must come into being and vanish into non-existence with the experience and non-experience respectively of them by us; yet, "it is only through consciousness that the world exists for us at all"; and even if the question "whether the consciousness . . . . has anything to do with the establishment of the relations in which it conceives reality to consist . . . is answered in the negative, there will still be an important sense in which understanding . . . may be said to be the principle of objectivity."<sup>1</sup> For it is through understanding or consciousness "that there is *for us* an objective world; through it we *conceive* an order of nature, with the unity of which we must reconcile our interpretations of phenomena, if they are to be other than 'subjective' illusions." It is true that there are many things as yet unknown to us, and even our scientific knowledge of a tiny flower is merely a "fragment of the real nature" of the flower. Yet, "Facts related to those of which the percipient is aware in the object, but not yet known to him, can only be held to belong to the perceived object potentially or in some anticipatory sense, in so far as upon a certain development of intelligence, in a direc-

<sup>1</sup> *Prolegomena*, p. 18.

tion which it does not rest with the will of the individual to follow or no, they will become incorporated with it.<sup>1</sup>

If we restate Green's position in language more acceptable to the realistic attitude of mind, it will come to something like the following. The things exist there independent of our knowledge of them; or, the things antedate and postdate knowledge. But the things are revealed to us, not while we gaze passively at the world; revelation presupposes, on the contrary, a function of thought, which interprets the cruder knowledge of sense further and further, and makes the world reveal itself to us. Thus the real world is in the process of being communicated to us. Through the different sciences of physics and chemistry, psychology and anthropology, we are trying to understand the world in its diverse aspects. So the world could not exist for us, it could not reveal itself to us, if we had no interpreting thought. Knowledge is the medium through which alone the Reality expresses itself. It also follows from this that nothing can have any meaning for us which is not statable in terms of knowledge. When, for instance, we speak of matter as affecting the

Green's  
position  
restated.

<sup>1</sup> *Prolegomena*, p. 73,



mind and producing therein certain sensations, we have to determine that matter in certain ways, otherwise the term matter reduces itself to a nonsensical sound only. Take away from our conception of matter all the different determinations under which it is thought, and matter reduces itself to nothing for us. In this sense then the world is sustained by knowledge or consciousness. The apparent absurdity of the position disappears if we remember that we are always speaking of the *known* world in this context.

An interpretation of the subject-object relation.

This again is the meaning of the idealistic phrase that the subject-object relation is universal. This phrase, we think, need not mean that the world cannot exist without an All-Knower or a Universal Subject as has been often supposed ; and a philosopher who would leave the question of the Universal Subject as a problem open to debate, as Green suggests in the passage quoted above, could still see the necessity of the position under consideration. For the moment we refuse to be satisfied with the vague belief that the world somehow or other exists there, and raise the question, how the world is *known* to us as a world at all with its distinctions between matter and mind, reality and illusion, our answers will be always in terms of those determinations

which imply the subject-object relation. As thus interpreted, there does not seem to be any essential difference between the traditional idealist and those critics of idealism who, in spite of the admission of the perfect rationality of the universe, hasten to distinguish their doctrine from what they think to be the doctrine of idealism proper. "The true meaning," E. Caird points out, "of the reflexion that objects exist only for a subject is, not that objects are reducible to the sensations through which we know them, but that we know no objects except those which are relative to a self, which therefore require to be contemplated in that relation in order that their true nature may be seen."<sup>1</sup> In fact, when we get rid of the false notion that to admit the necessity of a self is to reduce the object to the position of a mind-dependent sensation, the universality of the subject-object relation, which is generally supposed to be a peculiarly idealistic tenet, will be taken as the basis of every true philosophy, whether realistic or idealistic. The paths of the realist will of course diverge in the long run from that of the idealist, but not at such an early stage of the journey.

<sup>1</sup> *The Critical Philosophy, I. p. 420.*

The Ego-  
Centric  
Predica-  
ment.

This is perhaps the right place to consider another widespread misapprehension which afflicts even some of the best thinkers of our time. Professor R. B. Perry has been credited with the genius of Kant for having invented the phrase ego-centric predicament to indicate the basic fallacy of the idealistic position, in so far as it depends for its validity on the impossibility of conceiving things unconceived. Berkeley, for instance, insists in the *Dialogue* that he is content to put the whole of his position on one single issue. "If you can conceive it possible for any mixture or combination of qualities, or any sensible object whatever, to exist without the mind, then I will grant it actually to be so." But as it is a contradiction to talk of *conceiving* a thing which is *unconceived*, and that which is conceived must necessarily be in the mind, it is impossible to conceive, say, a house or a tree existing independent and out of all minds whatsoever. This, as the realist has no difficulty in pointing out, is simply the ego-centric predicament. "Granted that whatever we find to exist is an object which we perceive or think, does it follow that those objects cannot exist except in relation to perceiving or thinking . . . ?"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Hoernlé, *Idealism*, p. 92. Prof. Perry's own criticism is given in his *Present Philosophical Tendencies*, chapter vi.

Similarly, Prof. Pringle-Pattison thinks that this mentalistic doctrine of Berkeley is essentially circular, for all that Berkeley can prove by this argument is that the things "cannot exist *in the knowledge relation* without implying a mind or ego, and also that we cannot say anything about them except as known, so that out of that relation they are to us, in a Kantian phrase, as good as nothing at all. But this method of approach cannot possibly prove that they do not exist out of that relation; it cannot prove Berkeley's thesis that being-in-that-relation constitutes their existence. On the contrary, we should all say, *prima facie*, that being known makes no difference to the existence of anything real." This mentalistic argument, Prof. Pringle-Pattison urges, underlies the All-Knower doctrine which is also suggested by Berkeley himself, "But *if knowledge has the same meaning in the two cases*, the existence of a thing can no more depend on God's knowing it than on my knowing it."<sup>1</sup>

Here perhaps we come upon one of the instances in which the saying is true that the philosophers are notorious for meaning what they do not say and saying what they do

Its real  
meaning.

<sup>1</sup> *The Idea of God*, p. 192.

not mean. Because, when rightly interpreted, there does not seem to be any essential difference between the meanings of the mentalists and their critics. The mentalist, at least of the transcendental variety, would have, so far as we can see, no hesitation in accepting Prof. Pringle-Pattison as one of the clearest exponents of his argument; for, it does not purport to prove anything more than that we cannot say anything about the things "except as known," "so that out of that relation they are as good as nothing at all"; which, therefore, as Caird says in the passage already quoted, "require to be contemplated in that relation in order that their true nature may be seen." The things no doubt exist whether they are in the knowledge relation or not, but their true nature can be discovered only in that relation, otherwise they are as good as nothing for us. Hence, rightly understood, the ego-centric predicament can be denied, not by the realist who accepts the existence of determinate things in the world, but by the agnostic for whom the real things are never known, because they are either determined in different ways from those in which they are determined in the knowledge relation, or they are not at all determined in themselves; but as to know is

to determine, the things-in-themselves can never be known. Nothing less than absolute scepticism about the efficiency of knowledge is implied in any theory that seeks to escape from the ego-centric predicament ; and so, we confess, it has always been a matter of great surprise to us how this could possibly be accepted by a number of accomplished thinkers as a peculiar fallacy of the idealistic position alone.

There is no doubt a ring of absurdity about the assertion that the things cannot exist except in relation to the self ; but it is no less absurd to think that any serious thinker could have meant by this that they can exist *only while* a mind, either finite or infinite, knows them. That the understanding is the principle of objectivity, as Green sees clearly, remains true " whether the consciousness has anything to do with the establishment of the relations in which it conceives reality to consist " or not, and so the truth of that doctrine is not essentially connected with the truth of the theory of the Universal Ego. Berkeley's thesis then that 'being-in-that-relation constitutes their existence' can only mean that 'being-in-that-relation constitutes their only intelligible existence. Or, as Green again puts it, the external world is 'other' than any feelings of ours or any judgments we may form about them, but they

cannot be 'external' to consciousness ; to think so is to mistranslate otherness into externality. This again is essentially the Kantian position that the possibility of experience is the supreme principle by reference to which alone the objective validity of the categories can be proved, and that whatever lies beyond experience is only the thing-in-itself that cannot be determined by any of the categories.

A wide-spread misunderstanding of Green.

We may now incidentally see, in the light of these considerations, the real meaning of Green's assertion, repeated with tiresome uniformity, that it is the relations which constitute objectivity, or, as it is sometimes put more extremely, the objects are mere congeries of relations. What it really means is that nothing can be known as an object which is void of all determinations; that is, if we drop all determinations from the notion of an object, it reduces itself to something which is as good as nothing for us. "The first step in knowledge is to connect one appearance with another, as forming one object or apparent thing ; to identify appearances. This is done by instituting relations between them—relations which doubtless really exist, but which for us as sentient are not—and this is to condition them. The next step is to connect objects thus formed, in other words to condition, by mutual rela-

tions, the conditions of the first appearances. All knowledge is a continuation of this process. To think is to condition, and to condition is to think."<sup>1</sup> The mediating thought, that is, by connecting one appearance with another, makes knowledge definite, and this would be impossible for a creature that has only sentience and no thought. For a purely sentient creature, the world with its definitely determined things, with its distinctions between things and things, illusions and reality, the hallucinatory and the veridical, could not exist. Hence "thought, as consciousness of determination by relations, is necessary to constitute the object of intuition."<sup>2</sup> Two points need be noted here. On the one hand, Green insists that to know an object is to relate it to something else, both of which receive mutual determination through that relation, so that one cannot be fully understood except with reference to the other. Every object has many such determinations which constitute its reality; and conversely, the purely undetermined object is as good as nothing for us.

The second point of Green's contention is that everything has a nature of its own which

<sup>1</sup> *Works*, II, p. 289,

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171.



is gradually revealed to us through these progressive determinations, within the 'knowledge relation'; as our knowledge grows, the real thing manifests itself to us more and more. That is, though the things out of the knowledge relation exist as completely determined, our knowledge develops from the less determined to the more determined; consequently, though it is true that we are always in direct contact with the real things, yet there is a process of communication which makes our knowledge only potentially real at a particular stage. From this standpoint, Green says that "the objects are thus real, but only in themselves; for the subject learning to know they are so only potentially not actually. For him the beginning of knowledge is merely, 'there is something,' in other words, his first idea is of 'mere being'; this 'something' gradually becomes further qualified,"<sup>1</sup> and so on. This being the process of gradual revelation of the object to us, thought is the essential medium through which the things are to be known.

This analysis of the knowledge process, so profound and suggestive has been attacked mainly from two standpoints. First, one of

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193.

the most reiterated criticisms against Green is that he seeks in vain to reconstruct the living concrete reality by means of a system of abstract relations. It is needless to delineate all the endless variety of forms in which this criticism has appeared, and it would be unprofitable as well as unnecessary to reproduce the whole controversy at this place. What is, however, clear from our discussion so far is that the so-called 'living concrete reality' is neither denied nor under-estimated in this analysis. If by the concrete reality is meant our feelings and passions, desires and aversions, they are certainly real ; but, as Green himself is careful to point out, "We must always bear in mind that when certain writers speak of the 'unreality of mere feeling,' they mean feeling as it would be for a merely feeling consciousness."<sup>1</sup> That is, though the feeling can be felt by the merely feeling consciousness, if such a mind exists at all, it could not refer the feeling to its real conditions and thus know it in its actual reality. There is of course a kind of reality in the feeling as *felt*, but to know it scientifically is to refer it to its cause or its effect, and thus to make our knowledge concrete by referring the feeling to those conditions

<sup>1</sup> *Works*, II., p. 177,

under which alone it really exists. In this sense, the most intense feeling may give us the meagrest knowledge, in so far as the conditions under which alone it really exists are not known. The feeling, like every other event of the world, has its own conditions; and as the knowledge of the physical world advances through the determination of the physical events according to certain relations, and as through such determinations the events are revealed to us; so here, the felt feeling reveals its nature through the interpreting function of thought which refers it to its conditions. Regarded in this light, the feeling does not become less concrete by being reconstructed through relations; it is rather the relations which invest the feeling as merely felt with that concreteness which belongs to it as an existent fact. It is true that the feeling can be felt even when we know very few of the relations in which it really stands; for instance, "I may be acquainted with my tooth-ache and this knowledge may be as complete as knowledge by acquaintance ever can be . . . without knowing its 'nature.'"<sup>1</sup> But is it possible to deny that my tooth-ache has a nature on account of which it is different

<sup>1</sup> Mr. B. Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, p. 226.

from other things in the world ? To be merely acquainted is to know very little about the thing, and the dentist's knowledge of my tooth-ache, however indirect, is much fuller and hence more concrete than my knowledge of it by acquaintance. If my tooth-ache had no real 'nature' which is known only to the dentist, it would be absolutely extravagant on my part to pay him for the cure.

The fact then seems to be that when Green says that mere sensation or mere feeling "is in truth a phrase that represents no reality," he does not mean to resolve the feeling into a complex of thought-relations. The 'unreality of mere feeling,' as he himself sees, means only that a feeling "as it would be for a merely feeling consciousness" gives no real knowledge of those conditions under which alone it exists as a real fact. It is the scientific knowledge alone which, by referring the feeling to its conditions, gives us its real nature. So knowledge in the form of feeling has been always distinguished from intellectual knowledge proper,<sup>1</sup> and Green in minimizing the reality of feeling need not mean anything more than this that feeling cannot give us a knowledge of the world as an interrelated whole.

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Bosanquet's *Essentials of Logic*, p. 22.

Our conclusion.

The result then which we arrive at under the guidance of Green may be summarised as follows. There is a real world of things which we do not create but discover through experience. This experience, however, does not exist while we passively receive the sense-data. It implies the interpreting function of thought through which that which would otherwise be a mere play of unrecognisable throng of sense-data on our animal sentience receives articulation, and in this sense thought is the real revealer of the world to us. The world could not be revealed if we had only felt and not also thought. Now, the further point which we shall try to establish is that the function of thought involves certain ideals that are organic to our intelligence, so every intellectual interpretation presupposes the reality of those ideals which cannot be separated from the reality of the world. But before we proceed to the elucidation of this further point, it may be useful to show, by reference to some of the recent philosophical doctrines, that Green's concessions to realism are by no means peculiar to his position alone. Every thinker, howsoever idealistic in the long run, accepts the realistic contention as essentially valid. To this then we turn in the next chapter, which will incidentally throw light on some other controversial topics of the present day.

## CHAPTER V

### Knowledge and Reality.

In the last chapter we have raised the problem of subject-object relation and have indicated the impossibility of escaping from the ego-centric predicament, rightly understood. We have further seen that the ego-centric predicament by itself does not decide the issue between idealism and realism, and that the absolutist arguments in support of the doctrine of an All-Knower are not organically connected with those which go to prove the inseparability of the subject and the object implied in all knowledge and experience. Nothing is, however, farther from our thought than the suggestion that these two types of arguments are never mixed up in the writings of the absolutists. On the contrary, we believe that they always tend to run into each other in their works, and it is this which is largely responsible for the halting appreciation they have generally received at the hands of those who are realistically inclined in their attitude to the common facts of life. All that we claim to

Two  
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tism.

have shown is that certain tendencies are not wanting in the most thorough-going monists of our time to dissociate these arguments from each other, and so it is not at all necessary for one who sees the universality of the subject-object relation to accept also the doctrine of the All-Knower. And historically, there have been philosophers who accept the duality, as distinct from dualism, of experience without rejecting their pluralistic beliefs. Now, in view of the importance of this relation, it is necessary to consider some of the attempts at restating the cognitive relation and the discussions it has given rise to. This will indicate on the one hand that the realistic contentions cannot be, and in fact have not been, disputed by the true idealists; and on the other hand it will incidentally clear up the real issues that divide idealism from realism.

According to our interpretation of the subject-object relation, as developed in the last chapter, the things, though they cannot be known except in the knowledge relation, are independent of the fact that somebody knows them, and in this sense they are independent of experience. To many, this may appear as amounting to the rejection of the idealistic standpoint altogether, for, it may be thought, if there is anything that forms the central

core of idealism, it is this that nothing exists independent of experience. Now, we have already seen that Green's thoughts are not entirely opposed to this conclusion of ours. But the same conclusion may be further confirmed by the doctrines of the eminent idealists of a more recent age. And as Bosanquet and Bradley are the two idealists who have exercised a decisive influence on the contemporary tendencies of thought, we must turn for a moment to their systems.

As in the case of Green, so here, again, we may start with a statement of the realistic concessions of Bosanquet and Bradley. Bosanquet welcomes Dr. Moore's view that "the Idealist is in the wrong if he maintains that particular things in space are in themselves altogether different from what they look like to us;" and he thinks that this realistic contention has never been denied by Plato and Hegel, or by T. H. Green, Nettleship and Bradley. "*You* do not make the world;" it is emphatically urged, "*it* communicates your nature to you, though in receiving this you are an active organ of the world itself."<sup>1</sup> Absolutism, he further remarks, has a decisive agreement with neo-realism over against the neo-idealism of

Absolutism and realism.

<sup>1</sup> *Contemporary Philosophy*, p. 3.



Croce and Gentile, in so far as "Nature in its concreteness and beauty", for neo-realism and absolutism alike, "is real, and is real, as we know and value it, and is not created by our thinking."<sup>1</sup> It is, again, observed in another context: "When I use the word 'red' I do not refer to or mean my idea of red considered as my idea, though I do mean red as I understand it by help of my idea. When I use the word, I mean a colour, a quality of surface, or at least of light, which I represent to myself by help of one or more reds which I have seen, but which I think of as not dependent either for being or for quality on my happening to know it."<sup>2</sup> Similarly, "the sun means the sun; and whatever that may be, it is not anything *merely* in my mind, . . . not a psychical fact in my individual history,"<sup>3</sup>

The defect of neo-realism then, according to Bosanquet, does not consist in its insistence on the independent nature of the physical facts of the fact that somebody knows it. The real defect of the neo-realistic analysis of knowledge is rather to be found in its failure to realise that

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> *Logic*, I., p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

"the things of normal apprehension cannot be regarded as self-contained existents composed within themselves of the qualities which we find belonging to them."<sup>1</sup> Here absolutism is in relative agreement with critical realism, and so ~~for~~<sup>for</sup> parts company with neo realism; and the critical realist is, therefore, in the right when he urges, over against the neo-realist, that the group of qualities, if separated "from the context of percipients and of other things", would be "a mass of contradictions—of inconsistent magnitudes, figures, colours, temperatures, and the like." But thought cannot accept the perceived things to be ultimately real in so far as they are riddled with contradictions; consequently, the things as viewed by the neo-realist, cannot supply, as the critical realist rightly points out, "the physical objects demanded by science as the members of an existent world."

. On the other hand, the defect of critical realism consists, not in its insistence on the independent existence of the object as it conceives it, but in its supposition that the "content," or "essences," or "quality group," can never and in no degree be identified with the existent or the physical object. The object, according

<sup>1</sup> *Contemporary Philosophy*, p. 129.

to this doctrine, is "a mere existent, a bare 'that' which though sole object of thought, presents to thought no features that can be thought about."<sup>1</sup> "This, then," it is concluded, "the absolute severance of truth and reality as opposed to their relative identity, is the point of divergence between Critical Realism and Absolutism."<sup>2</sup>

Bosanquet's position so far, we believe, is quite clear and needs no comment. He is in fact in complete agreement with our contentions as developed in the last chapter. The world of knowledge, for him, is independent of the event of knowing. The contentions of the neo-realist as well as of the critical realist are true in so far as they insist on the independence of the world of the fact that I happen to know it. But the former goes wrong when he, not content with the assertion that the world is independent of knowledge, proceeds further to describe the things as atomic existences full of contradictory qualities; similarly, the latter is in the wrong when he sunders the 'what' entirely from the 'that', and fails to see that whatever is real must reveal itself in knowledge, though it is not created in the process of knowledge.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

It is only the thing-in-itself that cannot be revealed, and it cannot be revealed because it contradicts itself and so cannot be even thought to be anything. But the things cannot be in their ultimate nature unthinkable; on the contrary, they are what thought comes to affirm them to be. As Bosanquet himself remarks, Reality "may be defined as the object affirmed by thought."<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, thought may be described as essentially "an effort to define the universe by meanings adequately conditioned; to reconstruct the unity of the real in ideal or discursive form."<sup>2</sup>

Our difficulty in following Bosanquet, however, begins when he, not content with observing that thought is the medium in which Reality reveals itself, goes further to emphasise that self-revelation is "essential and inherent in the real, whose nature apart from it is self-contradictory."<sup>3</sup> This, in plain language, seems to mean that the real world cannot exist at all if it is not thought of or known, though not by my mind or your mind, yet by *a* mind. Here obviously we are back to Berkeley, and then objective idealism

The mentalistic tendency in idealism.

<sup>1</sup> *Contemporary Philosophy*, p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> *Implication and Linear Inference*, p. 149.

<sup>3</sup> *Logic*, II. p. 307.

becomes essentially Berkeleian idealism *in excelsis*. It is, however, one thing to insist that things are what we come to know them to be, and so they have no meaning that is not statable in terms of knowledge; but it is an entirely different matter when it is contended that things cannot exist at all when they are not within knowledge, or when they do not exist for a self. We need not multiply quotations to show that Bosanquet is anxious to maintain both these positions. And in so far as he does it, his insight, we are inclined to believe, is distinctly less tenable than that of Green who clearly sees that thought is the principle of objectivity, and that this remains true whether or not the consciousness has anything to do with the establishment of the relations in which it conceives reality to consist.

In fact, the revelatory character of knowledge loses all its meaning if knowledge itself be a part of what is revealed. It is true that "the universe is undoubtedly the object of apprehension and knowledge prior to them and determining them." But it does not follow from this that the universe cannot be "complete as a whole apart from apprehension, still less, of course, from experience."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Logic*, II. p. 313.

Far less does it follow that "the mind is a constituent of a living and self-determining real." But we need not press the point further in the present context, beyond remarking that revelation necessarily implies something which is revealed as well as something to which it is revealed, and so it becomes unintelligible in proportion to the obliteration of their distinction.

We may stop here to consider a difficulty in our position as so far defined. Is it possible, it may be asked, to separate existence from meaning? If the independent world has a meaning only in so far as it exists for the mind, then it appears to follow that the world when existing apart from the mind reduced itself to an unmeaning thing-in-itself. To put it in another form, if it is admitted that the world has no meaning except within knowledge, or except as it exists for a self, should it not be further admitted that it must always exist for a self on pain of being reduced to a thing-in-itself? Most of the idealists would perhaps reply in the affirmative. And it is just here that we fail to follow them. An unmeaning existence, we reply, is an existence that has not yet been realised in knowledge; whereas the thing-in-itself is not unmeaning in this sense. The latter, as we

Ambiguity in the term 'unmeaning.'

have already explained, is unknowable and unthinkable, because it is indeterminable. That which is *ex hypothesi* out of all relations to things other than itself, would be a mere being which is equal to nothing. On the other hand, an unmeaning existence is nothing indeterminable, only we do not know how it is determined, and so have no notion of the way in which it exists.

Prof.  
Joachim  
on the  
meaning  
of inde-  
pendence.

Our position, it is hoped, will gain in authority as well as clearness if we make a brief reference to the view of a thinker who is justly respected all over the world as one of the profoundest idealists of our time, and whose explicit assertions seem to go against our contention. Mr. Harold H. Joachim, in his monumental work, seems to have subjected the realistic belief to a very searching and damaging criticism. The whole of the second chapter of "The Nature of Truth" is apparently devoted to the refutation of the assumption that experiencing makes no difference to the facts, which is sometimes taken to be "the fundamental postulate of all Logic," and with the refutation of this assumption is also refuted the realistic belief in independent entities. But, we believe, Mr. Joachim's arguments, rightly interpreted, do not contradict our conclusion. On the contrary, it is made all the more clear in consequence

of his criticism of the false notions of independence. "We do not make or alter truth by our thinking," he admits, "any more than we make or alter goodness by our conduct, or beauty by our love or by our artistic endeavours. Truth is discovered, and not invented; and its nature is unaffected by the time and process of discovery and careless of the personality of the discoverer. It is to this independent entity that the judgment of this or that person must conform if *he* is to attain truth. Correspondence of *his* thinking with this 'reality' is truth *for him*."<sup>1</sup> This may rightly be regarded as the fundamental postulate of all Logic; but this account of the reality, as is pointed out further, represents only one side of the matter, and it will lead to confusion in the long run if it is not also remembered that "truth is actual as true thinking, goodness lives in the volitions and actions of men, and beauty has its being in the love of its worshippers and the creative activity of the artist. Truth, goodness, and beauty, in short, appear in the actual world and exist in finite experience . . . Doubtless it is irrelevant to the nature of truth whether *I* know it or *you*. Truth is independent of the process by which *I* come to know it, and

<sup>1</sup> *The Nature of Truth*, p. 20.



is unaffected by the time at which I know it. But yet this independent truth itself, whose nature holds aloof from the conditions of its 'existence for me' . . . lives and has its being in the judgments of finite minds." So far, if we understand Mr. Joachim's contentions aright, there is nothing incorrect in the description of the conditions under which I claim truth for my judgment. "But the 'correspondence-notion' attempts to render this description more precise by offering a definite theory as to *the nature of the test* which my judgment must satisfy if it is to be true."<sup>1</sup> And so all the difficulties of the theory of correspondence arise, not from its definition of truth but from the test it offers.

It is not necessary for our present purpose to explain in detail the coherence theory of truth; the only point of interest for us in Mr. Joachim's position is that he, on the one hand, has nothing to say against the independence of truth which we discover and do not create. And, on the other hand, he justly urges that the independent truth remains as good as nothing for us till it exists in our experience, and interpreted in terms of our knowledge. It is true that Prof. Joachim insists here more on the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

independence of truth than on that of reality; but his discussion, we believe, is invaluable for clearing up the meaning of independence, even when we are thinking, not of the independent truth, but of reality. Moreover, truth, as Bosanquet rightly remarks, has no meaning unless it is reality and unless it is in the form of ideas.<sup>1</sup>

In the light of this explanation, it may now be easy to understand the real meaning and force of the arguments directed against the position that experiencing makes no difference to the facts. This assumption would be perfectly harmless if it had meant only that the facts are independent of our experience. But it is generally associated with a particular theory according to which knowledge consists in the perception of agreement or disagreement between two factors, one of which is within experience and the other without experience. As thus taken, all the perplexities involved in the theory of representative perception, as pointed out by the philosophers from Berkeley onward remain unsolved. And no philosopher, we believe, can successfully answer the charge brought against the representative theory by Berkeley, namely, that we cannot compare the portrait with the original

The  
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pondence  
theory  
leads to  
agnos-  
ticism.

<sup>1</sup> *Implication*, p. 148,

when the latter is *ex hypothesi* always outside experience. Hence it is futile to defend the correspondence theory which must in some form or other appeal to the facts outside experience for the perception of the correspondence. In fact, the main arguments of the idealists have been always directed against this false theory of correspondence that implies a reference to what is supposed to be external to experience in the sense that it can never be within experience, and which therefore, as Mr. Joachim puts it, "may be anything you please"; for, as it is supposed to be beyond all possibility of experience "it remains beyond all and any knowledge, and is a mere name for nothing," it is even beyond the possibility of refutation.

It, however, seems extremely incredible that any thinker, with Berkeley's remarks staring in his face, can seriously accept the correspondence theory in the sense in which Descartes and Locke defended it. But it is questionable how far the theory can be so reformulated as to avoid all reference to the unknown and the unknowable, in so far as it is offered as a theory about the nature of the test which true knowledge must satisfy. The reason however why the idealistic analysis of the knowledge situation has not met with universal acceptance

is perhaps to be found in the false apprehension that the admission of the universality of the subject-object relation must go together with the reduction of the entire world of reality to purely mind-dependent ideas. But, as we have already tried to make tolerably clear, when it is insisted that all things are within the knowledge relation, and, as such, implies a subject, the implication is not that the things do not exist when nobody knows them; it only means that the manner in which they exist, and the relations that obtain among them, would be nothing *for us* if they were different from what are realized or realizable in the knowledge relation. Indeed to admit that the things outside the subject-object relation are different from what they are within that relation, or that they have conditions of existence unrealizable in the knowledge relation would be to contradict oneself; for, the difference could be known only in so far as both the terms of difference are within experience. So nothing is gained by reference to the unknowable. Moreover, the admission of an intrinsic difference between the things as they are known and as they are in themselves must ultimately lead one to a state of despair of knowledge and reasoning; for, the concepts we use in describing the things must possess on the one hand definite meanings;

and on the other hand these meanings must have objective reference. This however does not exclude the possibility of changes in the meanings of the concepts under 'the stress of progressive analysis; what it implies is that the concepts must have determinate meanings even when knowledge is adequate, and so the determinateness in the concepts involved in perfect knowledge is just the determinateness of the real world that expresses itself through the concepts. When the meanings are changed, it is not simply a question of arbitrary definition in what direction the changes should be made. The changes are always dictated by the world which we endeavour to know.

Things  
may be  
knowable  
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when they  
are not  
known.

There seems to be, however, another reason why the idealistic analysis of the knowledge situation is not acceptable even to many accomplished thinkers of rare merit. As we have admitted above, the idealist's expressions admit of two different interpretations, On the one hand, he takes infinite pains to confirm the ordinary realistic thesis that the things are independent of the fact that a mind experiences them. On the other hand, he also seems to suggest that they can exist only while they are experienced by a subject, either finite or infinite. To avoid misunderstanding, it is, however, necessary to distinguish clearly

between the assertion that things are knowable and that things exist only while they are known. Agnosticism is necessarily involved in the denial of the former assertion ; but one may deny the latter as well as agnosticism as equally false. It is true that nothing can be said about a thing except in terms of thought or experience, but this fact by itself does not prove that the thing exists only while there is a subject to experience it ; all that it does prove is that the thing outside experience must have those characteristics that it is found to possess within experience, or that the thing reveals its real nature within experience, and this is but the faith of reason in itself. No doubt there are thinkers who appear to confuse the one position with the other, and argue that because there is no difference in our descriptions of a thing completely outside experience and of a naught, so all things must be within experience. But if our previous explanations be correct, then, these two positions may be kept separate from each other, and so he who accepts the necessity of the one position need not necessarily commit himself to the other. Hence it has been our endeavour in these pages to separate the arguments that have been advanced in support of the contention that the thing reveals itself in experience from

those that go to lend countenance to the presumption of a Universal Subject or an Eternal Consciousness.

The theories of correspondence and coherence express each a half-truth.

In view of the exaggerated notions that still prevail about the difference of the idealistic from the realistic contentions, it may be useful to point out at this place that the correspondence theory rightly understood is not entirely opposed to the idealistic analysis of the knowledge situation. It is never denied by a true idealist that our knowledge in so far as it is true must correspond to a reality that we do not create but discover, so that it is a matter of revelation as distinct from construction in the literal sense of the term. There is no doubt a constructive activity of thought involved in knowledge through which alone, as we shall see later more clearly, the world reveals itself to us; but this does not mean that the constructive activity of thought is identical with the creative activity of imagination. On the contrary, there is always in knowledge a reference to something which *is there* to be discovered in relation to which the truth and falsity of a judgment is determined. "No distinction between truth and falsity" it is emphatically observed by an eminent idealist, "can exist unless, in the act or state which claims truth, there is a reference to something

outside psychical occurrence in the course of ideas. As the claim to be true is made by every judgment in its form, there can be no judgment without some recognition of a difference between psychical occurrences and the system of reality. That is to say, there is no judgment unless the judging mind is more or less aware that it is possible to have an idea which is not in accordance with reality."<sup>1</sup> The idea, that is, may either be "in accordance with reality" or at variance with it; and it is only when the idea is in accordance with or corresponds to, the reality that it is true.

But the real defect of the correspondence theory consists in not the *definition* but the *test* that it claims to offer of a true judgment.<sup>2</sup> It is futile, as we have seen, to attempt to know whether our knowledge at a particular stage is true or not by reference to things external to knowledge. The correspondence can be known only by the amount of harmony that knowledge has so far attained to. The more knowledge tends to be a whole, the greater is our assurance of correspondence; the more there are discords and disharmony in knowledge, the greater is

<sup>1</sup> Bosanquet, *The Essentials of Logic*, p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> This we believe to be the significance also of the italicized words in Mr. Joachim's passage quoted above,



the distance between knowledge and reality. The correspondence theory as a test of truth cannot serve the purposes even of the realist who believes in the possibility of knowing the true nature of things; for, it can only terminate in scepticism and agnosticism when developed to its legitimate consequences. There are however eminent realists in our time who have come to admit that it is "by no means an easy matter to discover a form of correspondence to which there are no irrefutable objections."<sup>1</sup> But what prevents them from accepting the alternative theory is that the assumption that there can be only one coherent system requires itself a proof. "Thus, for example, it is possible that life is one long dream, and that the outer world has only that degree of reality that the objects of dreams have; . . . such a view does not seem inconsistent with known facts."<sup>2</sup> This difficulty in the coherence theory which is widely felt by the contemporary thinkers cannot be adequately handled in the context of the present chapter, and so must be postponed till the function of thought is explained. And for this, it may be useful to turn for a while to some of the outstanding

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy* p. 190.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 191.

features of Kant's analysis for the obvious reason that it was Kant who for the first time, at least in modern philosophy, brought out clearly the important rôle which thought plays in revealing the world.

Postponing the consideration of Kant's views on the status and the function of thought to the following chapter, we must address ourselves here to the elucidation of some of the vital points in the position as so far defined. Our discussion has so far been directed by the desire to accentuate the elements of truth in the idealistic and the realistic contentions respectively. The controversy has been perpetuated as much by linguistic ambiguities as by an over-statement of the truth. The realists, as we have tried to maintain, are right in their refusal to be dislodged from the commonsense view that knowledge does not create, it only discovers. The error of their position does not lie in insisting on the independence of the world; this independence may, in fact, be rightly called one of the first postulates of knowledge. They, however, go wrong only when, and in so far as, they look at the "face-value" of the things and so fail to see that the process of discovery is not as simple an affair as they are inclined to believe. Discovery implies a vigorous shifting,

The  
merits  
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(a) of  
realism.

in the way of interpretation and re-interpretation, of the materials given through sense *qua* sense or even through commonsense. It is only through such a shifting or interpretation that the world is discovered by us. In this regard, critical realism is nearer the truth than neo-realism. The only defect in critical realism consists in its absolute separation of the 'object' from the 'essence' or 'content.'

(b) of  
idealism.

It is only idealism, however, that can claim the full credit of having given an adequate analysis of the process of discovery. The idealists have rightly insisted, in different contexts, on interpretation as an essential factor in discovery. The world, they urge rightly, exists for us only in so far as the given materials are interpreted systematically. They, however, go wrong when, and in so far as, they proceed further to insist that the world cannot exist at all if not interpreted by a mind. It is this assumption alone that forces on them the conclusion that the world must exist only for a mind, either finite or infinite. If it does not exist for a finite mind, they repeat almost with tiresome uniformity, it must at least exist for an Eternal Thought or Absolute Mind. But the world, as we have urged frequently, may very well dispense with an interpreting mind, though it cannot

be actualized except as it exists for such a mind.

The world as actualized in knowledge at a particular stage may be different from the world as it is ; hence the possibility of error. The actualized world, in order to be true, must correspond with the world as it is. This correspondence, however, is known by the amount of stability or self-consistency as realised in knowledge, and not by instituting a comparison between the world as actualized and the world as it is. You may compare, for instance, the world-picture of Ptolemy with that of Copernicus, or the world-picture of Newton with that of Einstein, and measure their truth-value by comparing their respective stability. But it is impossible to compare any of them with the original and examine the degree of correspondence which each has with the original. This is impossible, again, not because there is no original, but because it is not actualized. "The end of truth," it has been rightly remarked by Bradley, "is to be and to possess reality in an ideal form . . . . Truth is not satisfied until we have all the facts, and until we understand perfectly what we have. And we do not understand perfectly the given material until we have it all together harmoniously, in such a way, that is, that

we are not impelled to strive for another and a better way of holding it together.”<sup>1</sup> From this, however, it does not follow that reality must always exist in the ideal form for a self, or that apart from a self the reality does not exist; for, as Bradley himself sees clearly, “there surely is no meaning in a copy which makes its original.”<sup>2</sup>

One-  
sidedness  
of the  
idealistic  
analysis.

We have already explained the half-truth expressed by the theories of coherence and correspondence respectively. We may observe here that the separation of coherence from correspondence, or, what is the same thing in different words, of the actualization from the independence of the world, is ultimately untenable. In this respect, one has to learn a lesson from Professor Perry's just complaint against the one-sidedness of the idealistic analysis, as it is generally presented. To assert that every mentioned thing is an idea or a content, he urges, is virtually a redundant proposition which amounts to this that every mentioned thing is mentioned, or that every idea is an idea. But this conveys no knowledge even about ideas.<sup>3</sup> This objection, we believe, is unanswerable if the content of apprehension is supposed to have no

<sup>1</sup> *Truth and Reality*, p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 117.

<sup>3</sup> *Present Philosophical Tendencies*, p. 131.

reference to the world beyond our experience; but, on the other hand, it has no force against the position for which the idea is the world in so far as it is actualized in experience; that is, in so far as the content is taken to be the 'what' of the 'that' which is in the process of communication or actualization.

This leads us naturally to the controversy on the distinctions between the *act*, the *content* and the *object* of knowledge introduced into contemporary thought by the famous Austrian philosopher Meinong. In every perception, according to Meinong's analysis, there is an act of perception distinguishable from the content perceived, and this latter, again, is distinguishable from the object. These distinctions have led to a serious division even in the realist camp. Professors Alexander and Laird are introspectively convinced of the presence of the act, but the neo-realists in general do not find any trace of it in their minds. What is important in this controversy, for our purpose here, is to enquire whether this psychological distinction throws any light on the epistemological problem of the relation of the mind to the world. It has often been supposed that the radical error of idealism is either to confuse the act of perception with the thing perceived, or to confuse the content

Meinong's  
analysis  
of know-  
ledge.

of knowledge with the object of knowledge. So far as the former distinction is concerned, we think, it does not decide the chief issue between idealism and realism. We may, for example, think of the same circle through numerically different acts of thought, but few will deny that the circle has an existence only in our minds corresponding to which there may be nothing in the real world. The most you can say is that the circle subsists, but that does not tell us whether it exists independently of the knowing mind. Even Berkeley, as is well known, distinguished between the act of perception and the sensible objects perceived, and this in spite of his insistence on the mind-dependent character of the latter.

On the other hand, the distinction of the content of perception from the object has an important bearing on the epistemological problem. And the real force of Meinong's position may be appreciated from his remarks on the past event. When I am thinking of a past occurrence, it is obvious that the object to which my thought is directed is not existentially present in my mind; I am thinking of the past event through my present thought. That is, my present idea or content is intentionally directed to something which is not itself present existentially in my mind. The

past event occurred apart from my present thought, this is quite obvious. On the other hand, the event has no meaning *for me*, until it is a content of my consciousness. It is not of course necessary for the existence of the event that I should think about it; that is, my mind or my judgment does not constitute an element in the life of the event itself, it is not sustained by *my* judgment. Yet, it has a meaning for me only in so far as it is actualized in my experience. From this it is, we believe, clear that the object to which a content is intentionally directed need not be itself a content. Repeating the language of Professor Joachim in another context, we may say that the object is independent of the process by which I come to know it, and is unaffected by the time at which I know it. But, yet, this independent object itself whose nature holds aloof from the conditions of its 'existence for me' lives and moves and has its being in the judgments of finite minds.

The tendency of the idealists such as Bosanquet and Bradley is clearly towards obliterating the distinction between these two aspects of knowledge. Because the world has no meaning for me except in so far as it exists in my experience, it is forthwith concluded

Bosan-  
quet's  
criticism  
of  
Meinong.



that the world does not exist at all when it does not exist for a mind. This, we believe, is the radical error of their analysis of knowledge; and so it is necessary to dwell upon the point in a little more detail.

In pursuance of the tendency to deny the distinction between the two aspects of knowledge just mentioned, Bosanquet, for instance, concludes his examination of Meinong's theory by remarking that "it is plain that the separation of content and object of thought, whether in the Brentano-Meinong account of the mind, or in the recent Critical Realism, in spite of its plausibility and convenience, is altogether untenable."<sup>1</sup> His arguments, however, appear to be anything but convincing. He assumes that the relation of the object to the content may be one of similarity, and then points out that there is "no point at which we make a step from an image to an object resembling it."<sup>2</sup> But is the assumption indispensable for the theory? We think not. The truth it seeks to propound has nothing to do with the similarity between the content and the object; and so its value, we think, should not be assessed by connecting it with some type of

<sup>1</sup> *The Nature of Mind*, p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 51,

representative theory in its worst form.<sup>1</sup> But the fact is that the theory cannot be rejected except by showing that somehow or other it is a form of the copy-theory of truth, and while it holds the field there is no straight way to Bosanquet's type of idealism. Consequently, he remarks:—"Somehow—it may be difficult to explain but somehow, plainly, the real objects and events remain as immediately what we think of, what we talk about and affirm or deny things of, as anything which we touch or see." But does not Bosanquet himself assert the existence of the content when he relentlessly criticises the realistic theory of independence? He seems to be emphatic in his assertion that "what an undistorted view of the presupposition of knowledge affords us, is not a psychical character of things apart from the mind, but a logical character of reality as revealed through the mind,"<sup>2</sup> and it is this logical character, we suggest, which is in fact the content or the idea. "The nature of reality",

<sup>1</sup> We do not altogether deny the value of Bosanquet's criticism of the Brentano—Meinong analysis in so far as the latter tends to identify content with image. But Bosanquet appears to reject altogether the distinction between content and object, and this is suggested by his bracketing Meinong with the critical realist.

<sup>2</sup> *Logic II.*, p. 307,

he points out further, "is not differentially dependent on knowledge ; but it is a fallacy to go from that to the statement, ' Reality is what it is apart from knowledge, ' " and this fallacy he supposes to be plain.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, it has been conceded by him fully at another place that the critical realist " has grasped the principle that truth cannot include the reality in its perfect character of a completed concrete whole ; " but his defect is that he draws from this the conclusion that the ' that ' is " incapable of entering into experience, " and so here we have " a complete and not relative separation between facts and ideas, and therefore, as Mr. Bradley has shown to be a necessary consequence, we are left without either. " <sup>2</sup> Here, Bosanquet clearly recognises the reality of ideas as well as their relative separation from facts. It is not, therefore, open to him to deny altogether the ' contents ' as distinguished from ' objects. ' Moreover, it is widely believed that the world for Hegelian Idealism is, in ultimate analysis, a content of the mind, either finite or infinite ; and this conclusion is strongly suggested by the idealist's criticism of the realistic belief in an independent world of facts, as well as by his

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, II., p. 306.

<sup>2</sup> *Contemporary Philosophy*, p. 136,

explanation of the subject-object relation. He is apparently never tired of emphasising the futility of every attempt to posit the existence of a reality which does not exist for a mind. And what is a 'content' if it be not a *thing existing for a mind*? We may leave aside the question whether there is, for instance, a horse-content coming between the act of perception and the object. But none can deny, and Bosanquet the least, that 'content' is not a mere word, but it is the logical meaning or the thing as it exists for the mind. Neo-Hegelianism, as far as we can see, would fain deny the existence of the 'object' rather than of the 'content.'

The 'object' again, as we have frequently urged, should not be confused with the 'content.' In respect of the relation between them, a certain amount of plausibility may be enjoyed by an anti-realistic theory while it is analysing the material world as confined within the narrow limits of the present moment. But it betrays its utter bankruptcy as soon as it undertakes an analysis of our knowledge of the past events or of other minds. How do we know a past event which had perhaps occurred even before we were born? How, again, do we know that other minds exist? So far as the constructive aspect of knowledge is concerned, the contributions of Bosanquet and Bradley, we

The crux  
of the  
idealistic  
position.

think, are of inestimable value here. But when they come to deal with the revelatory aspect of knowledge, we suppose, their analysis is anything but satisfactory. Let us turn for a moment to Bosanquet's views on these two points.

"If we do not get to the past event by a jump from similar content to similar occurrence, how do we get to it?"<sup>1</sup> His answer is: "However remote in time or space may be the fact, it is always, if established, established as an amplification belonging to the same world which we presuppose and specify in setting out to prove it. If we are aware of house, we say, it had a builder; and we think as directly of the builder as of the house itself, even if the house is in Crete and the builder is of about the age of Minos." He goes perilously near the realist's position when, in another context, he remarks: "Of course, there is a reality which is more than an individual's thought. There is, at least, the thought of other individuals."<sup>2</sup> From these and other similar passages, it seems that Bosanquet does not deny the realist's contention that the things do not depend for their existence upon the fact that someone happens to know them; that is, he appears to believe fully that events may

<sup>1</sup> *The Nature of Mind*, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> *Logic*, II., p. 267.

take place, and individuals may exist, even when they do not happen to exist for a self. But, in that case, it becomes increasingly difficult to understand what he means when it is argued emphatically in different contexts that the realist's contention is vitiated by "one central fallacy," *viz.*, "that to find the reality independent of experience you must have recourse to a reality apart from experience."<sup>1</sup> "Subjective Idealism is the nemesis of realism. What is wanted is to go forward, amending and expanding the experience which progressively approximates to giving us things as they are, under the full conditions which enable them to be what they are."

Thus, for Bosanquet, reality must exist within experience. You may amend and expand your experience, but "Knowledge has no such presupposition" as may require us to assume that "the reality known exists independently of the knowledge of it, and that we know it as it exists in this independence." On the other hand, he admits fully that we know directly the builder of the age of Minos as well as the existence of other individuals, though the builder lived long before we were born and the other individuals are more than our thoughts. Can these two

Bosan-  
quet's  
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tion

<sup>1</sup> *Logic*, II., p. 302.

sets of expressions be reconciled? According to his first contention, the builder as well as the thought of other individuals cannot be real independently of the knowledge of them; but, according to the second, they have a reality which is more than an individual's thought. Bosanquet then is obviously asking us to think of a reality which is at once *more than* our thoughts and yet *not independent* of the knowledge of it. But this demand, we believe, none can satisfy with his present intellectual equipment; and none can satisfy it because it amounts to a demand to think of the unthinkable, or to know the unknowable. This contradiction in Bosanquet's position must remain inherent in every theory that does not recognise fully the revelatory character of knowledge. The contradiction may be concealed by ambiguous expressions; but nonetheless it remains there till realist's contention is conceded to. Here, Realism is the nemesis of Idealism.

It is perhaps clear from what we have already said that we do not deny that reality, as Bosanquet insists, lies ahead, that thought is the world-builder and it builds the world by an amplification of the knowledge given by sense *qua* sense. Hence, thought, as rightly and admirably shown by him, has a *nisus* to the concrete universal; and in this respect, the

inadequacy of the modern analysis consists in regarding thought as "an abstracting and generalising faculty, and science a departure from factual experience."<sup>1</sup> It is further true that the modern analysis is defective in so far as it turns back "in search of independence gained by omission" and, consequently, "cannot avoid committing arbitrary acts of abstraction".<sup>2</sup> But realism, we believe, is unquestionably on the right track when it insists that the world may exist even if not built by thought, that thought is only the revealer and not the builder in the literal sense of the term. It builds the world only in this sense that it removes contradictions from the perceived world and thus makes our experience a systematic whole in which alone the world as it is in itself is fully revealed; but the world remains a world even when it is not thus revealed, and so revelation is not essential to the reality of the world.

The ultimate source of Bosanquet's confusion on this head is perhaps traceable to the ambiguity with which he uses the term 'mind.' The percipient, he says, cannot be withdrawn from the world without making it the poorer by such an withdrawal. And he is right if he

The mind  
and the  
subject.

<sup>1</sup> *The Principle of Individuality and Value*, p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> *Logic II.*, p. 303.



means by this that the sensation of sound, for example, is excited when a certain number of vibrations occur in a given interval of time, so that there can be no sound in the world when the mind is withdrawn from it. "The admission" he points out, "that the secondary qualities have special natures dependent upon mind is enough by itself to break down the principle that qualities of things must be independent of perception."<sup>1</sup> If this be all that Bosanquet is anxious to establish, then surely the world is mind-dependent in this sense. But, we submit, that does not prove that the sensation, the mind and the wave are dependent for their existence upon the fact that we know them. On the contrary, it seems clear that they are there even when they are not discovered; and in this sense they predate and postdate knowledge. And in so far as Bosanquet confuses these two different senses of the term 'mind-dependent,' he commits the same fallacy which Green has detected in the 'objective' method of Psychology, *viz.*, the confusion of sentience with consciousness.<sup>2</sup> From this defect of the psychological method, Green, of course, seeks to draw a conclusion which is

<sup>1</sup> *Logic II.*, p. 306.

<sup>2</sup> *Works I.*, p. 482.

essentially similar to Bosanquet's position, and here his conclusion is open to the same objections that we have raised against that of Bosanquet. But he at least shows clearly the fallacy of confusing the mind as sentience with the mind as the knower, or, as he puts it elsewhere, the subject with the mind. We need not, however, press this point further at this place.

We may summarise our contentions against Bosanquet's idealism in the language which he himself uses in different contexts. Thought is "always an affirmation about reality through the process of particular minds. Its conception is correlative to that of reality. If you ask what reality is, you can in the end say nothing but that it is the whole which thought is always endeavouring to affirm. And if you ask what thought is, you can in the end say nothing but that it is the central function of mind in affirming its partial world to belong to the real universe."<sup>1</sup> The real defect of realism, as we have suggested above, consists in its repudiation or misconception of thought; but it is right in insisting on the independence of the world which, though correlative to thought, is

Conclud-  
ing  
remarks.

<sup>1</sup> *Contemporary British Philosophy, First Series, p. 60.*

not created by it, and so exists even when it is not revealed to an individual mind. The world, though it may in this sense be called a reality external to knowledge, is being communicated or actualized in our worlds as known, and so not external in the sense that it has a nature opposed to what is actualized or realisable in the world of knowledge.

This, however, does not mean that the two worlds are differently located, one coming between the other and the knowing mind. A philosopher need not maintain that the world of commonsense is different from the world of science simply because the defects of the former are removed by science which so far transcends commonsense knowledge. And though it is true that science discovers factors which are inaccessible to sense, yet this does not mean that the world of commonsense is a sort of *tertium quid* shutting us off from a direct vision of the real world. Similarly, when philosophical reflection transcends the scientific standpoint, we are not confronted with a so far unknown world. On the contrary, it is the same world which was imperfectly known from the previous standpoints is now revealed in its true nature.

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## CHAPTER VI

### Presentation and Judgment

In the last chapter we have done what nobody will consider to be a mean justice to the revelatory aspect of knowledge. This aspect has been explained with a fuller emphasis than what it has so far received at the hands of the idealists. We may now turn to the constructive aspect of knowledge without perhaps running any very serious risk of being misunderstood. And as it was Kant who practically lay the foundation of a theory of knowledge on its constructive side, a restatement of some of the outstanding features of Kant's theory may be profitably made the basis of our own contentions.

Kant as  
the real  
founder  
of episte-  
mology.

Kant is rightly regarded as having first laid the foundation of true idealism. This, however, does not mean that the idealistic principles were never known before Kant. On the contrary, the thoughts of Plato and Aristotle were surcharged with a pre-eminently idealistic aura, and Plato at least is generally regarded to

have been the forerunner of the modern idealists who have, as a rule, drawn inspiration from the writings of this ancient philosopher. Coming down to the modern period, again, the thoughts of Leibnitz always move in an idealistic atmosphere, and the influence of Leibnitz on Kant's thought is simply enormous. But, in spite of these anticipations, it was Kant who for the first time placed in an articulated form the essence of an idealistic interpretation of the universe, in so far as it was he who first realised the importance of discovering the morphology of reality by an analysis of the morphology of knowledge. It is true that Locke also had a vague idea of the importance of a prior analysis of knowledge, as a necessary propaedeutics to metaphysics. But, in the absence of a clear idea of the nature of knowledge, he mistook the problem of psychology for that of epistemology. What he failed to see was that psychology as a science of the growth and development of the individual mind has to presuppose, and so cannot justify, the principles which are at the root of all the sciences, physical or mental. And though in the fourth book of the *Essay*, he comes in sight of the proper epistemological problem, his mind was too much occupied with the psychological questions of the previous

chapters to allow him to see fully the nature of the problems of knowledge. Philosophy had to wait for the development of the false method of empiricism into the intellectual *impasse* to which Locke's principles were brought by Hume, before the right epistemological standpoint could be disentangled from the psychological. And once the epistemological standpoint was attained, it became plain that nothing but idealism, in some form or other, could offer a true theory of existence.

The importance of Kant, in the history of philosophy, consists in his having first realised the existence of a number of first principles at the basis of knowledge and reality. With the insight of a real genius, he saw that there are certain universal features of thought which permeate human knowledge; and so a philosopher, even when ostensibly engaged in questioning their validity, has to accept them to be true. This he expressed by remarking—"Conceptions which make experience possible are for that very reason necessary." Another main prop of the Kantian analysis of knowledge is contained in the celebrated statement: "Understanding can perceive nothing, the senses can think nothing. Knowledge arises only from their united action." We shall first add

The epoch-making discovery of Kant.

a few comments on the latter remark and then proceed to expose the misinterpretations to which the former has been subjected, specially by those who have found it impossible to give up the psychological standpoint. Yet, as is well known, it was one of the permanent results of the Kantian analysis of knowledge that psychology, like all other sciences, has to presuppose the principles of knowledge, and so, it is impossible to solve the proper epistemological question by the psychological method.

The problem of objective reference.

The distinction between sense and thought with which Kant opens the transcendental logic is intended to convey the profound truth that, the reason why we refer a representation to the objective world is not to be found in the nature of the representation as a feeling that is felt. A representation, as a mere something before the mind, has no mark in it by which it can be recognised as either an objective reality or a mere illusion. It is a mere idea, in the Lockian sense, or a mere presentation in the sense in which this term is used by the psychologists of our time. As Kant explains himself in the Prolegomena, "the senses set the planets before us, now as moving onward, and now as reversing their course; and in this there is neither truth nor falsehood, so long as we are content to regard all we

see as mere appearances, and to make no judgment in regard to the objective movements.”<sup>1</sup> In explaining this passage, Caird adds that “it seems reasonable to say that there can be no doubt of the subjective reality of the phenomena that are presented to us by sense, whatever doubt there may be about their objective reality. There can be no doubt that appearances appear, . . . or are presented to us in sense. So long as we . . . do not ask any question, or make any assertion. . . . so long, it would seem, we cannot be deceived . . . . The question of truth or reality arises only when we go beyond the appearances, and make a judgment in which they are referred to an object. So long as the mind *passively* apprehends that which is presented to it, so long it cannot err; for *so long* there exists for it no distinction between appearance and reality, and therefore no possibility of mistaking the one for the other. To render such mistake possible, the mind must be active; it must go beyond what is immediately given in sense and refer it to some object, which perception may represent but which it does not exhaust, and with which, therefore, it is not immediately identical.”

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Caird in *The Critical Philosophy*, I., p. 382.



That the question of truth and error does not arise at all on the level of mere apprehension is clearly seen by the advocates of "the ideal system." So in explaining why we may doubt of sensible things, Descartes, for instance, gives us two reasons. We doubt in the first place, "because we know by experience that the senses sometimes err, and it would be imprudent to trust too much to what has once deceived us ; secondly, because in dreams we perpetually seem to perceive or imagine innumerable objects which have no existence."<sup>1</sup> Allowing for the naive way in which Descartes expresses himself, the force of his remarks consists in pointing out that the mere fact that something appears before the sense-organs does not prove its reality ; for, even illusions are as immediately perceived as the so-called real things. Hence the criterion by which the real is to be distinguished from the unreal is not to be found in the mere fact of presentability. It is, we believe, "the same truth which Locke attempted to express by his famous definition of idea as that which the mind makes an object of contemplation without

<sup>1</sup> *The Principles of Philosophy, Part I, 4th Principle.* Compare also the *Third Meditation*, where he is more explicit.

regard to its truth or falsity. And Kant is only reasserting the same truth with a clearer consciousness when he observes: "when an appearance is given us, we are still quite free as to our judgment on the matter. The phenomenon depends upon the senses, but the judgment upon the understanding, and the only question is, whether in the determination of the object there is truth or not. But the difference between truth and dreaming is not ascertained by the nature of the representations, which are referred to objects (for they are the same in both cases), but by their connection according to those rules, which determine the *coherence* of the representations in the concept of an object, and by ascertaining whether they can subsist together in experience or not."<sup>1</sup>

It is however important to remark here that Kant's observations are not at all connected with his phenomenalist position, and so their

<sup>1</sup> *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysic* (edited by J. P. Mahaffy), p. 45. Here, we have a clear anticipation by Kant of the Coherence Theory of truth, and so far Mr. N. K. Smith is right in holding that this theory, "though frequently ascribed to Hegel, has its real sources in the *Critique of Pure Reason*." (*Commentary*, p. xxxvii). But it is rather strange that such a thorough scholar as Mr. Smith should have remarked that Kant "never himself employs the term Coherence." (*Ibid.*, p. 36.)

force is not in any way dependent on a preconceived notion of the relation between the subject and the object. In other words, the problem here is the purely epistemological problem of the factors involved in perception, and hence it cuts right across the boundary lines of idealism and realism. Whether the world of objects be organically connected with the knowing mind or not, it is still necessary to enquire into the implications of the distinction we ordinarily make between truth and error, reality and illusion. And so the problem has again made its appearance in contemporary philosophy, and it is in the hands of Mr. B. Russell that it appears in a form deserving of its importance. Mr. Russell's distinction between the two types of cognitive relation has become a current coin of contemporary thought. There are, according to him, two different cognitive relations with which a theory of knowledge has to deal, namely, acquaintance and judgment. Acquaintance is a two-term relation, while judgment is a multiple relation. And as acquaintance is a two-term relation, it has nothing to do with the distinction between truth and error. The problem of error properly arises only in relation to the cognitive relation of judgment. Hence, again, for him, there can be no question of truth and error with regard to

the sense data which are objects of sensible presentations.<sup>1</sup>

The similarity of Mr. Russell's distinction between acquaintance is also sometimes called presentation—and judgment to the Kantian distinction between representation and judgment is too obvious to be commented on. What, however, is more striking is the Kantian strain in which Mr. Russell, notwithstanding his predilection for the correspondence theory of truth, argues in support of the coherence theory. The whole process of verification, it is said, "may be illustrated by looking up a familiar quotation, finding it in the expected words, and in the expected part of the book."<sup>2</sup> "Dreams and waking life," it is remarked again, "in our first efforts at construction, must be treated with equal respect; it is only by some reality not *merely* sensible that dreams can be condemned."<sup>3</sup> The only standard by which we distinguish the real things of the

Russell's acceptance of the coherence theory.

<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Prof. Hoernlé remarks that taken abstractly, particular sense data simply *are*. "In this of course, their 'reality' is not in debate." *Studies in Contemporary Metaphysics*, p. 76. Compare also: "In truth, all appearances are *prima facie* real ones, and later are sorted out."—Alexander, *Space, etc.*, II. p. 192.

<sup>2</sup> *Analysis of Mind*, p. 270.

<sup>3</sup> *Our Knowledge of the External World*, p. 79.

waking life from the unreal things in dreams, he sees clearly, is that the former have a "greater extent and consistency." "It is only the failure of our dreams to form a consistent whole, either with each other or with waking life, that makes us condemn them."<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to explain in a clearer form and within such a short compass the coherence theory of truth as suggested by Kant in the passage quoted above. And Mr. Russell's reluctant homage to the coherence theory lends countenance to the presumption that no serious thinking can be absolutely false. In his pilgrim's progress, the philosopher is sure to tumble upon the rest-house of truth provided he be sincere in his search, and serious in his endeavour to reach the temple of knowledge. Thus, we find even Berkeley and Hume recognising in the *order* and *coherence* of the ideas the distinguishing feature of what is real, though, for the former, it is divinely established, and, for the latter it is the source of the illusion of identity and independence.

Interpre-  
tation  
Implies  
data to be  
interpre-  
ted

Thus we see that the distinction between judgment and presentation has permeated philosophical thought from the time of Descartes down to the present day. There are, however, philosophers who would reject the distinction

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

on the ground of its psychological absurdity. Thus, for instance, it is a well-known criticism of the Kantian theory of knowledge that it implies a false distinction of sense and understanding, and so the Kantian distinction of the sense-appearances from the principles of thought is now generally regarded as the unwarranted dogma of a defunct psychology. Similarly, Mr. Russell's distinction between knowledge through acquaintance and knowledge through description has been generally thought to be based on an abstraction. But the criticism of a theory is certainly one-sided when it does not do justice to all the aspects of the idea it is intended to express. Even if it be admitted, though it has not been universally admitted, that the simple apprehension or the mere perception of the sense-appearances apart from the activity of thought cannot be an event in the mental history of an individual, that we do not first know the appearances as mere appearances and then proceed to judge about them; but, on the contrary, our first having the appearance is to refer it to an objective order of things—yet, the question remains if the distinction between the real and the unreal has any root in the mere fact that certain appearances appear. Illusions, for instance, must exist before our senses in order that they can be rejected as

false. No philosopher perhaps has been able to supersede T. H. Green in minimising the importance of sensations in the sphere of knowledge; and yet, Green had to admit that the question about the objective reality of an impression "is not equivalent to a question whether a feeling is felt. Some feeling must be felt in order to the possibility of the question being raised at all. It is a question whether a given feeling is what it is taken to be, or in other words whether it is related as it seems to be related."<sup>1</sup>

What has been so far said about the distinction between illusion and reality holds good also of the familiar distinction between the mere appearances and the real appearances. The sensible size of the sun, the sensible shape of the stick in the tumbler half-filled with water, the sensible rest of the earth, are not real.<sup>2</sup> In fact, as we are told by commonsense as well as science, the visual sense is the most prolific source of such false appearances. But

<sup>1</sup> *Prolegomena*, Sec. 12.

<sup>2</sup> That it is impossible to identify *sensa* with physical objects, as is done by Mr. Alexander, has been rightly urged by Mr. Stout (*Mind & Matter*, p. 208). We must add, however, that the mistake in illusory appearances arises from the appearance being referred to conditions under which it does not exist; and this mistake is known by the contradictions to which our first interpretation leads to.

they are false, not because they do not appear. Dreams and hallucinations do not differ in respect of the fact of presentability from the real appearances. On the contrary, there are false appearances which are as sensibly given after their correction as before. While the illusory appearance ceases to exist with the advent of knowledge, the obstinate appearances of sense, like the sensible size of the sun, do not fail to be sensibly presented even after we have known them to be false. In such cases, the rational belief and the false appearance live together almost coquetting with each other throughout the earthly career of man. Whatever may be the explanation of the sensible size of the sun, for instance, it is only the sensible size that is ever presented before our sight. If then we reject the sensible presentation as false, the reason evidently cannot be found in the mere fact of presentability. And this conclusion remains true even if we replace the word presentation by the more illuminating term perspective.

We must note here a serious confusion of thought involved in the controversy on the relation of sense to understanding. Kant has sometimes been supposed, specially by psychologists, to have laid the foundation of what is now called the genetic theory of our knowledge

The problem of genetic psychology is different from that of epistemology.



of the external world, in so far as he rejects simple apprehension in favour of apprehension accompanied with judgment as a true description of beginning of experience. Hence the truth of his distinction between sense and understanding, it is fancied, depends upon the findings of psychology. That is, if it be psychologically established that sense precedes thought in the development of individual knowledge, then, surely, Kant was wrong in ascribing thought to primitive experience; if, on the other hand, judgment be psychologically established as being a co-operative factor with sense from the beginning of individual experience, then, Kant's analysis, it is supposed, is founded on a sound psychological basis.

Now, it is well-known how our psychologists are seriously divided on the question of priority of sense to thought. Thus, for instance, James Ward is emphatic on sense-knowledge being prior to thought-knowledge, and urges over against the position of Green that "though sense is speechless, it is not 'senseless.'"<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, it has been contended by no less a psychologist than Mr. G. F. Stout that "if we examine critically Ward's treatment of the development of the

<sup>1</sup> *Mind*, xxviii. p. 259.

individual percipient prior to the beginning of the trans-subjective stage, we find that it already involves in manifold ways thought as well as sense."<sup>1</sup> Fortunately, however, Kant's analysis has nothing to do with the uncertain movement of the psychological theories. Whether or no sense precedes thought as a matter of genesis may be left to the happy conjectures of the psychologists. For, we venture to suggest, the epistemological distinction between sense and understanding does not depend upon the truth of a psychological theory. To confuse these two standpoints was the besetting sin of Locke who, in his disgust at the theory of innate ideas, supposed that to show the *a posteriori* derivation of knowledge is to refute the epistemological priority of the formal conceptions of thought. But it never occurred to him that experience regarded psychologically has epistemological presuppositions. Similarly, Kant might reply that thought may or may not be psychologically *a priori*, but it is surely *a priori* epistemologically. In other words, whether or no the child refers the immediate presentation to a real world which is not itself presented, it is still true that there could be

<sup>1</sup> *The Monist* xxxvi. 1926, p. 41 ; *Studies in Philosophy and Psychology*, p. 110.

no real world for us, if we had not systematised the immediately given sense-appearances according to the formal conceptions of thought.

The  
epistemo-  
logist's  
fallacy.

Returning once more to the distinction between presentation and judgment, we must repeat that it is one thing to say that immediate experience enters as an indispensable factor into all knowledge, while it is an entirely different thing to assert that immediate experience by itself is the source of a particular type of knowledge, the other type having its origin in thought alone. This is in flat contradiction with Kant's dictum about the co-operation of sense and thought in all knowledge, which is the corner-stone of his theory of knowledge. But to deny the existence of the immediate sense-data is to commit what may be called the "epistemologist's fallacy." Facts in order to be interpreted must be first apprehended as given, however short the interval may be between these two phases of knowledge. It is needless to labour this point—a point which has been pressed with relentless acuteness by the critics of idealism.<sup>1</sup> Kant's "natura

<sup>1</sup> E.g., by Prof. A. Seth in his *Hegelianism and Personality*, pp. 79—83. It is however claimed that even Hegel did not mean to reduce the matter of intuition to pure thought. See McTaggart's *Hegelian Dialectic*, second edition, pp. 61, 113, 207.

materialiter spectata" cannot be reduced to mere relations any more than the ideas and perceptions of pre-Kantian empiricism or the sense-data of contemporary philosophy.<sup>1</sup> If the post-Kantian identification of form and content is interpreted as a polemic against the distinction of the given facts from their interpretations, we must then reply in Kant's words that our understanding is not intuitive. The recognition of the immediate objects of perception then, we claim, is the true merit of what is generally known as subjective idealism. In so far as Kant's critics have failed to do justice to this aspect of his teachings, the real difficulties of external perception are simply flung to the winds.

If, then, it is admitted that presentation and judgment, though not two distinct stages in the development of knowledge, are yet two distinguishable factors or moments in the process of knowledge, and if it be further admitted that the distinction between the real and the unreal

<sup>1</sup> This, however, does not mean that we can *know* these ideas, in the strict sense of the term 'knowing,' without and apart from all relations. We can surely feel the tooth-ache without being dentists, but to know the feeling in the totality of its conditions under which alone it is real, is entirely different from knowledge in the way of feeling. It may be further noted that Kant's sense-manifold may be sense-data as well as the data of commonsense which are unsystematic.

is not to be found in the mere fact of presentability, then, the conclusion seems inevitable that the distinction must have its roots in the other factor, namely, judgment or thought. In other words, the distinction between the real and the unreal is due to a particular type of intellectual organisation which we possess as rational beings, and except in relation to a still unrealised intellectual ideal about what the world must be, the distinctions we habitually make between truth and error, or real and unreal appearances, would be unmeaning for us. To put this in yet another form, nothing would be false or illusory for us if thought had no power to anticipate, before actual observation or experiment, the general features of the world. This, we venture to suggest, was one of the conclusions which Kant sought to establish in his transcendental logic which he defined as the science of the *a priori* knowledge, its possibility, principles and extent. Once this is made clear, it will appear that the paradoxical dictum of Kant—Understanding makes Nature<sup>1</sup>—is essentially true, though it might be made much less paradoxical and its offensiveness consider-

<sup>1</sup> Kant did not put his dictum exactly in this form; it was Green who adopted this formula as expressing Kant's meaning. I owe this suggestion to Professor H. H. Joachim.

ably mitigated by restating the dictum in the form that Nature reveals herself through intellectual construction, or that theoretical construction is the process of self-revelation of the real world. The contention of the modern critics that we do not create the world in the process of knowing it; on the contrary, knowledge presupposes the existence of the world; or, that the existence and the quality of things are not affected by the fact that somebody knows them;—this contention, as we have admitted before, is essentially correct. But this, rightly understood, does not conflict with the dictum that knowledge implies intellectual construction, so that what is revelation from the side of the object is construction from the side of the subject. This, as will be explained below, is one of the permanent achievements of Kant in the sphere of epistemology.

With these comments on Kant's distinction between sense and understanding, we must now proceed to the really valuable part of his theory of knowledge.

It is now a matter of common knowledge that the avowed purpose, or at least one of the purposes of the *Critique of Pure Reason* was to vindicate, as against the disintegrating attacks of Hume, the validity of the synthetic judgments that lie at the foundation of the

Divergent  
opinions  
on Kant's  
reply to  
Hume.

mathematical and the physical sciences. But how far the sceptical attacks on the possibility of knowledge admit of an answer, and how far Kant has been able to carry his enquiry to successful and permanent issues are questions on which there is anything but unanimity among the critics and exponents of the Critical Philosophy. There are not wanting, even to this day, persons of deserved celebrity in the speculative field who are of opinion that Kant's labour has been entirely futile, because Hume's problems are made of such stuff as necessarily precludes the possibility of anything approaching a satisfactory or final solution. Now, historically, the question is at least as old as the *Critique* itself. The first definite note of doubt about the achievements of Kant is struck in a comparison in which the 'Prussian Hume' is supposed to be merely chewing the cud of the 'causal whirligig' while the English Hume is credited with a truer insight into the difficulties of the knowledge situation.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Mendelssohn sees in the Critical Philosophy only a revival of the scepticism of Hume. It is, however, in Solomon Maimon's observations that we find the most damaging criticism of the Kantian

<sup>1</sup> Hamann's Letter to Herder, quoted by Höffding in his *History of Modern Philosophy*, ii., p. 113.

position as an answer to Hume's sceptical deliberations. According to this acute critic, whose acuteness and critical gifts are thought almost unrivalled by Kant himself, Hume has by no means been refuted by Kant, and, it is further remarked, the sceptical conclusions of Hume cannot be refuted. The plausibility of Kant's refutation of Hume is said to be due to a fatal ambiguity in the term 'experience.' There is a whole world of difference between the experience from which Hume proposes to derive the causal concept and the experience on which Kant bases his famous transcendental deduction of the categories. Experience, for Hume, is simply the invariable perception that generates in us habits and expectations; for Kant, on the other hand, experience involves necessary order in the sequence of phenomena. Maimon is here inclined to side with Hume in holding that the given exhibits only temporal relations without necessity, so that it is idle to demonstrate objectively valid rational knowledge beyond the sphere of pure mathematics. Another point pressed by Maimon is apparently of a more serious nature. The forms of knowledge upon which rests the entire burden of the transcendental logic can be discovered only by way of experience; but as experience can guarantee neither the completeness nor the



necessity of the categories, Kant's dream of a deduction of the forms of knowledge has been entirely futile. And even granting that our thought commands a system of categories they can never be actually applied to the given.

Maimon's criticism of the Kantian theory of knowledge has more than a historical importance. In the opinion of many contemporary thinkers his criticism goes to the very root of the difficulty of Kant's analysis of knowledge, and hence possesses a significance that is more or less of a permanent nature. In fact, some of the most searching criticisms that have been recently directed against Kant's position appear to all intents and purposes to countenance by implication a modified form of Maimon's semi-sceptical solution of the problems of knowledge. It is, however, a matter of paramount importance to realise clearly that an unqualified rejection of Kant's standpoint must lead one to despair of knowledge; for, as we hope to explain below, scepticism is the only attitude of mind that can ever offer a logical alternative to criticism. Indeed, the issues involved in Kant's reply to Hume are of a more general nature than what they are ordinarily realised to be. The question is not whether an individual thinker has been successfully refuted by

another or not. On the contrary, the issues that divide Kant from Hume and the different lines on which they respectively develop their arguments represent the two alternative attitudes of mind that must be ultimately displayed by every thinker who squarely meets the problems of knowledge. If Kant has failed to answer Hume, then there is no escape from scepticism ; if, on the other hand, scepticism be not the last word of human reason, then one must accept the fundamental principles of the Kantian theory of knowledge. Indeed, all attempts at striking a middle course, when carefully scrutinized, will be found to be based on confusion of the real issues ; and if a thinker still persists in the belief that a novel theory may avoid the excesses and the defects which in his opinion are inseparable from the positions of Hume and Kant, this must be due to an imperfect appreciation of the transition from Hume to Kant. To set these contentions of ours in a clearer light, we shall first of all state the Kantian position in its original form without attempting to mitigate the apparently paradoxical nature of his central thesis, and then turn to Maimon's reflections to see how far the Kantian position can be regarded as an 'overcome standpoint.'

The  
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gical  
problem  
is distinct  
from the  
epistemo-  
logical.

Kant's contribution to the theory of knowledge, as he himself tells us in the preface, is contained in the apparently extravagant assertion that the objects must conform to our cognition ; or, as he puts it in a different context, Understanding is the source of all combinations. There is yet another form in which he is fond of formulating the problem of the Critical Philosophy ; namely, what and how much can reason and understanding, apart from experience, cognize ? These are some of the different expressions of the main thesis that Kant sought to make explicit in his monumental work. And in restating his position, we shall take the liberty of proceeding in a way slightly different from that of Kant, partly because the relevant arguments of the *Critique* are very often overlaid with extraneous details of dubious value, and partly because the simplicity and directness of his arguments are, not infrequently, suppressed by the formidable technics of the German language.

The first point we would like to press is a commonplace of logic ; namely, that every assertion, positive as well as negative, claims to be true. This must be accepted even by the most redoubtable opponent of intellectualism. That we can make intelligible assertions about whatever is real, and that our assertions are meant

to be true, may fairly be taken to be the bedrock postulates of all speculative explorations of the Universe. When, however, this apparently innocent position is pressed home in its full force, it will be found to develop implications some of which are of very far-reaching consequences for philosophy. One of these implications is that the psychological and the logical aspects of a belief are not identical. That is, a belief cannot be true on its own right, howsoever necessary be its emergence as a psychological event in the mental history of an individual. An erroneous belief has its own history ; and it, like all other events of the world, stand in need of explanation. Again, the explanation of a false belief, in its turn, presupposes the distinction of truth and falsity, so that in respect of a given explanation the question of validity may be freshly raised. If, on the contrary, we identify the psychological with the logical aspect of the belief, the crudest superstition would have to be accepted as equally true with the most carefully weighed conclusion of the scientist or the philosopher. Hence, reason must sit in judgment on the will to believe, and the psychological question of the origin of belief should not prejudice the question of validity. It is strange that the truth of such an ultimate

implicate of knowledge has failed to carry conviction with the opponents of intellectualism of the different schools who, in spite of their internal divergence on a number of points, agree in their insistence on the impossibility of distinguishing the psychological from the strictly epistemological enquiries. It will be necessary to examine this widespread tendency in greater details. In the meantime, we accept this distinction as one of the fundamental points of epistemology, and proceed to bring out a few more implications of the logical commonplace under consideration.

Once it is admitted that the distinction between a true and a false belief is not to be found in the nature of the belief as an event in the mental history of the individual, it is easy to see that what invests it with the logical character is its conformity or otherwise to something beyond itself. That is, the truth or falsity of the belief has to be ascertained by reference to an objective order of things, so that when an assertion is claimed to be true, what is implied is not simply that an individual has somehow or other come to hold a particular belief, but that it has an objective basis in the nature of things. No theory of truth that does not distinguish between these two aspects of an assertion can stand the scrutiny of critical thought.

With these preliminary remarks, if we now restate the problem of *a priori* knowledge, it will assume some such form as this : Is it possible to anticipate the character of that objective world which determines the truth-value of an assertion? Our answer is that the very possibility of knowledge rests on the power we possess of foreseeing what the world must be in its general features. Apparently, there is a ring of absurdity about this position, and the reason is that we all suffer more or less from an empirical bias which pursues us right into the domain of speculative enquiry. Yet, on a closer scrutiny, it will be evident that scepticism must follow in the wake of radical empiricism. If we had no power of anticipating, prior to observation and experiment, the rational implicates of the world, it would have been utterly impossible to unravel its mystery by the help of the purely *a posteriori* methods of investigation. This, it is needless to say, was the chief contention of Kant in the transcendental deduction of the categories. The idea which he sought to express with wearisome repetitions in that deduction is, in the opinion of one of the ablest exponents of Kant's philosophy, thoroughly justified. "Undoubtedly nature, as we perceive and think it as a system of unitary, permanent

Nature as  
a System-  
atic Unity  
is not  
known  
through  
sense.

things bearing a reciprocal relation to one another, is not conveyed into our consciousness through the senses, but is created by the activity of the understanding. The eyes and ears convey to us separate fragments of perceptions, as they do to animals also. Out of these, the understanding, by reflecting and inquiring, ordering and supplementing, makes the totality of related things that we call nature. We hasten to add that this is, of course, not to be taken as meaning the understanding of the single individual, but the intellectual activity of the generations that are united in the unity of the historical life. It is this which first creates a primitive system of concepts in the words of a language, and later produces in philosophy and science an ever more complete system of reality. If the world, as we now represent it, is in extent and form other than the world of the ancient and mediæval philosophers, this is without doubt the consequence of all the intellectual labour that has in the meantime been expended. The mathematicians and astronomers, the physicists and chemists, have constructed our world ; the manner in which it is at present manifested to the senses in no wise differs from that of two thousand years ago.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Paulsen, *Kant*, p. 175.

Contem-  
porary  
tendency  
to deny  
the Unity  
of Nature.

Paulsen, we believe, has rightly emphasised here the constructive aspect of knowledge, which may almost be called the corner-stone of the Kantian epistemology. Knowledge, according to Kant, is not derived from mere sense-experience ; that is, science is not merely a matter of registering sense-given facts. Mere sense-perception cannot reveal Nature which is the subject of experimental inquiries. It is only in consequence of the intellectual ideal of a systematic unity which the scientist brings with him into the laboratory, that the experiments succeed in feeling the otherwise inaccessible heartbeats of Nature. Here, of course, Kant's fundamental thesis comes into collision with the spirit of modern science and contemporary thought ; for, as is well known, it is one of the main tenets of contemporary science and philosophy that nature is neither systematic nor a unity. The world, it is emphatically maintained, is full of contradictions, and is, at best, an assemblage or aggregate of elements that cannot be ultimately reduced to a unity ; and it has been consequently urged that the intellectual ideal, together with the tendency to systematize, is only a rational make-shift useful for the convenience of practical life.

Now, in view of the fundamental nature of the issue involved in this contention, it will be



necessary to consider it in some details. Meanwhile, it may be admitted that there is, no doubt, a sense in which the actual world is riddled with inconsistencies, and this has been fully recognised even by those who accentuate the rational character of the world. In fact, had there not been conflicts and discords in our actual experience, the tendency to systematize, and for the matter of that reason itself, would remain as a hidden power in us. But in that case, it would be entirely unnecessary to undertake the laborious investigations for making the world yield its secrets; for, both philosophy and science are born of the disparity between what we find the world to be and what we think it ought to be. This difference between the real and the ideal underlies all interpretations of Nature and History. Reason, therefore, is not like an instrument which we can take up or lay aside, and the systematizing tendency is not a mere tool for achieving practical efficiency. On the contrary, it is the source of the intellectual ideal which inspires and permeates all attempts at understanding the world. The pragmatist and the evolutionist, the idealist and the realist,—in fact, everyone who is interested in giving an intelligible account of the world—has of necessity to presuppose the possibility of a systematic pre-

sentation. The only difference is that they seek to systematize in different ways. Hence, when they reject each other's interpretations, it is wrong to think that they can reject the intellectual ideal. We may differ as to *how* we systematize, but to refuse to systematize is to give up philosophy; in this sense, the pragmatist and the humanist are no less intellectualists than the banned intellectualist proper. The fact is that the ideal of a systematic whole to which thought inevitably looks forward, or thought's *nisus* towards a whole, as Bosanquet puts it, is responsible for our dissatisfaction at any theory which appears to be inconsistent with what we think the world to be. Hence, again, the law of consistency is regarded as the ultimate law of thought and existence.

The mood of self-complacency in which the apparently conflicting sense-data are taken to reveal the ultimate nature of the material world, and the unqualified rejection of the need for further systematization, which are so characteristic of contemporary science and philosophy, may be, at best, a passing mood of reason. But this cannot afford a permanent satisfaction, for, thought by its very nature looks forward to the ideal of a systematic whole. This *nisus* of thought to the whole is, in fact,

present, not only in philosophical constructions, but in science as well as commonsense knowledge. The process of systematization begins from the moment when the child asks for *names* under which it can classify the things of ordinary experience, and thus introduce unity into the confusing sense-presentations. It is, again, the same *nisus* which forces on the scientist the task of a further unification of commonsense knowledge. And, finally, philosophy arises out of the very same logical urge to remove inconsistencies from knowledge, and thus to reveal the world as a completely systematized reality.

This process of unification is effected in accordance with those fixed forms of thought that are generally known as the categories or the first principles of knowledge. It was Kant's merit, as suggested above, to have first commenced the exploration of this region of transcendental elements of knowledge and existence, and this constituted his epoch-making discovery. But, in view of the misinterpretations to which the doctrine of categories has been subjected, it is necessary to turn for a while to the consideration of this invaluable theory.

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## CHAPTER VII

### Some Misconceptions about the Categories

The contrast of empiricism with criticism, and consequently the distinction between realism and idealism, appears in its vital form in connection with the ultimate principles of knowledge and existence. Locke, in his zeal against all forms of *a priori* philosophy and the theory of innate ideas, was prevented from recognising the part played by the "understanding" in transforming the chaotic manifold of sense-presentations into a world, and consequently, he sought to derive the ultimate principles of knowledge from the sense-manifold, and finally reduced them to mere creatures of the mind. In reviving the doctrine of *entia rationis* of the Schoolmen, Locke was merely giving expression to the spirit of the time. His *tabula rasa* is only the mystic's "globe of light" passed into the hands of a philosopher. The purely receptive understanding of the mystics is freed from the encumbrance of divine influence, and the theologian sinks into a philosopher. But it was not open to the philosopher,

Miscon-  
ceptions  
as started  
by Locke.

determined to emancipate thought from the extravagances of *a priori* speculations, to indulge in the idea of an eternal understanding, and hence his only alternative was to show the empirical origin of all the eternal verities and the so-called innate ideas. As was to be expected, it was David Hume who perceived the legitimate consequence of this empirical method, and so he raised a problem which he claimed to be both important and new, "little cultivated either by the ancients or modern."<sup>1</sup> What is the nature of that evidence, Hume asks, which assures us of any real existence and matter of fact, beyond the present testimony of our senses? All transcendence of immediate experience, it is replied, is due to a subjective tendency arising from repetition of similar instances. By means of the relation of cause and effect, Hume thinks, we go beyond the evidence of our memory and senses. But the knowledge of causal relation is not attained by *a priori* reasonings; hence, it is ultimately due to the customary transition of the mind from one presentation to its usual attendant. This conclusion Hume admits to be extraordinary yet inevitable.

<sup>1</sup> *Enquiry*, Green's edition, *p.* 23.

The widely divergent interpretations of the transcendental deduction of the categories, and the equally divergent views on the merits of the deduction still prevailing among Kant's critics and commentators, leave no room for a summary defence of Kant's reply. It is, however, necessary to indicate clearly where contemporary philosophy fails, in our opinion, to appreciate the exact nature of the movement from Hume to Kant. The contrast of the selective with the creative function of the mind, the adoption of the psychological stand-point against the epistemological, the rigid separation between knowledge and reality—these and similar other features which characterise contemporary thought appear to depend on a false view of the first principles of knowledge. While this error is allowed to continue Kant's reply will remain unappreciated. Indeed, the very fact that even eminent thinkers sometimes pretend to miss Hume's fallacy is a proof that the theory of categories needs restatement. A consistent empiricist, we believe, should be able to swear by the legacy bequeathed by the Scottish sceptic, and is expected to admit clearly that the first principles of thought and reality are nothing better than custom-bred associations. They are, in other words, certain habits or tendencies of our minds acquired by a process

of sensitive experience in the individual or the race. This conclusion, however, is not always drawn explicitly, though it is strongly suggested by some of the characteristic tenets of current thought.

The error of objectivism is the same as that of mentalism.

As a protest against the idealist attempt to consider the entire universe as a content of the mind in some sense or other, the modern realist is bent upon eviscerating mind of all its contents and, if possible, wiping the mind itself out of existence. So he looks about to examine the different things with the label "mental" and his judgment in each case is the same, *viz.*, "away with the impostor." He takes up, one by one, the abstract and the concrete, dreams and illusions, relations and universals, laws of thought and facts of feeling, and finally the mind itself. On examination it is found that all these items have been erroneously labelled "mental." They must take their seats out there among the objects; and lastly, the mind itself must follow suit. Thus, current realism aspires to be called objectivism, and its theory of mind terminates in behaviourism.

The realist's account of the categories is inspired by the same ideal. The categories are described as pervasive features as distinct from the variable ones,<sup>1</sup> and if Kant referred them

<sup>1</sup> *Space, Time and Deity, Vol. I., p. 192.*

to the mind, that was because in the age in which Kant and Reid lived, this was, it is said, the only way of indicating that the world of experience contains pervasive features as well as variable ones. Is this a right interpretation of the doctrine of categories as held by Kant?

To identify the categories with the pervasive features of the world of experience, we submit, is to put the transcendental enquiry in an extremely misleading light, for, it prevents us from seeing the real problem to which Kant's entire labour in the *Critique* was devoted. The fundamental problem to which it was the merit of Descartes to draw the attention of thinkers for the first time, and in solving which philosophers were led to propound widely divergent theories, is altogether obscured by this identification. The theories of Occasionalism, Pre-established Harmony and Parallelism are the different attempts to solve this basic problem of modern philosophy, while the pantheism of Malebranche and Spinoza, the monadology of Leibniz, the phenomenalism of Kant, and even the theories of Identity and Panlogism of the post-Kantian period arose out of reflections upon the same problem. This, as is well known, is the problem of the real and the ideal, which Descartes brought to consciousness, for which he has been claimed to be the father of modern



philosophy. Except in relation to this problem, the Kantian doctrine of categories must remain as the strangest offspring of philosophical perversity. To the subjective idealist he points out that the categories are not mere "creatures of the mind" or "fictions of imagination"; on the contrary, they enter, in the words of Prof. Alexander, as constituent factors into every existent. In opposition to the realist's position, on the other hand, he urges that they are not in Nature abstracted from Spirit, and that if they had belonged to abstract Nature, our knowledge of Nature would never go beyond the habits of expectation to which Hume had reduced all our inferences from experience. That is, the mentalist and the realist alike separate the logical from the metaphysical necessity, and hence tend to reduce logical relations into mere psychological associations.

The true  
meaning  
of cate-  
gories.

The new theory, on the other hand, germinated in the Aristotelian conception of the categories as both "kinds of predicate" and "kinds of being." The truth which Aristotle sought to express by his doctrine of categories was what is now known as the correlativity of thought and thing. And Kant, notwithstanding his criticism of the Aristotelian list, sought to express the self-same truth, as a protest against the empiricist's separation of the ulti-

mate laws of Nature from the fundamental laws of Thought. Any interpretation that does not bring out the correlativity of the real and the ideal is, therefore, sure to miss what was one of the chief aims of Kant's doctrine of categories to establish.

Yet, this aspect of the doctrine it is important to recognise not only on its own merits, but also to understand Kant's historical position. The problem of the Ideal and Real has been called "the axis on which the whole of modern philosophy turns."<sup>1</sup> It is one of the chief results of Kant's transcendental investigations that the ordinary conception of the relation between knowledge and reality is untenable. The categories are not merely the universal features of facts of experience, but also the universal modes or forms of thought involved in experience. The result of this view is, as put by Green, "to overcome the separation, which in our ordinary thinking we assume, between the faculty or capacity or subjective process of experience on the one side and the facts experienced on the other."<sup>2</sup> In other words, whatever is real or can be thought

<sup>1</sup> Schopenhauer's Essay : *The Doctrine of the Ideal and Real*, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Prolegomena*, Sec. 34.

of as real, must come under one of the categories, and that which is neither a substance, nor a quality, nor any of the other categories, is indistinguishable from nothing; it is matter without form, and hence unknowable and incapable of standing, to borrow a current expression, as the subject of significant propositions. Thus, Kant exploded the false basis, upon which the separation between the subjective and the objective elements of knowledge was made by his predecessors, and this he did by showing that the laws according to which thought works in knowledge are inseparable from the universal laws according to which objects or Nature as a system of things can exist for us. The necessity of thought and objective necessity are inseparable, so that to understand the fundamental laws of objects is also to gain an insight into the basic laws according to which thought works. Prof. Alexander's account, then, we are inclined to believe, ignores this aspect of Kant's doctrine, and it is this which is responsible for the widespread misunderstanding which he shares with Kant's critics, like Mr. H. A. Prichard, who think that Kant was unconscious of a fundamental objection to his account of knowledge, though the objection is "so obvious as to be hardly worth stating; it is of course that

knowing and making are not the same."<sup>1</sup> It is hardly necessary to add that this, far from being an obvious objection, is one of the most permanent intellectual conquests that were ever achieved by a thinker.

It is not then a superficial observation that Kant's philosophy is a halfway house to the Hegelian idealism. It is, however, incontestable that Kant was far from identifying his synthetic unity of apperception with the Absolute of the later philosophers. In fact, he protests against this identification in the most emphatic terms; and he is equally emphatic against the extraction of a real object from pure logic. But it is no less incontestable that one of the most vital points which he sought to make clear for all time was that the logical and the metaphysical aspects of the categories are inseparable. Nature which is "self-contained for thought"<sup>2</sup> may be a useful postulate for natural science; but in the philosophy of nature, we cannot accept without examination that postulate which is justifiable only from the abstract standpoint of the natural sciences. The pervasive features of the world of experience or the laws of Nature, when

<sup>1</sup> *Kant's Theory of Knowledge* p. 236.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Whitehead, *The Concept of Nature*, p. 3.

we consider them as externally related to mind can be nothing superior to the mental habits of a species of individuals who are doomed to know Nature through the transient presentations of the senses.

The entire merit of the Kantian account of the categories lies in showing that the ultimate presuppositions of knowledge are also the ultimate conditions of the world of experience; for, Nature exists only for a rational individual who is constantly guided in his investigations by the *ideal* of a unitary system. Nature reveals herself to man because he is more than beasts and less than God. An intuitive understanding, as Kant says, is the prerogative of God alone, while animals are condemned to merely sensitive experience. Man, on the other hand, has both sense and understanding, and so Nature exists for him only in so far as the 'chaotic manifold' of sense-presentations which are alone *given* in the strict sense suffer gradual transformation under the intellectual ideal of a thorough-going unity.

Every scientific theory is begotten by the intellectual *nisus* towards a whole.

We are not at this place concerned with examining how far Kant's account of the categories, as suggested above, can be ultimately maintained without developing it further and carrying it on to absolute idealism. We are only trying to remove some of the misapprehensions

and misgivings which appear to cluster round his theory of knowledge owing to misconceptions about the nature of the categories. We have no hesitation to offer the warmest reception to the realist in so far as he teaches that the world of reality is not the mere contents of the universal mind, nor is it the unrolling of mental events by a creative imagination or æsthetic activity as taught by neo-idealism. We may similarly accept the realist as a fellow-combatant against the attempts to leave the sure ground of experience. Our only complaint is that the realist does not sufficiently and always realize that Nature the deciphering of which is the object of natural sciences is not given as a complete fact like colour or sound to the purely receptive sensibility or, to borrow a modern phrase, *noetic* consciousness. Nature of course is given in another sense, *i.e.*, in the sense of being independent of the chance movements of individual fancy arising from, say, the laws of association. The laws, on the contrary, according to which we consciously or unconsciously interpret Nature are not due to arbitrary impositions of mental forms on a foreign material. Understanding has its inherent laws which it can no more violate than water can refuse to flow downwards. These ultimate laws are obeyed by every scientist though he may not

be conscious of the fact that they are being obeyed. All his attempts to revise and remodel knowledge are actuated by the belief that Nature is a complex whole. The need for a new theory is but an admission that he failed so far to understand Nature, and it is born of the incapacity of the old theory to present Nature as a systematic whole. So far the idealist and the realist must go together.

It must be noted further that though Nature is there completely independent of the scientist's mind, and though it is revealed to him only because he is a sensitive as well as a rational being, yet, the Nature about which the scientist forms his theory is not *given in any other way* than through the theory, and so it is impossible to compare the theory with something external to it in order to see how far his knowledge corresponds to natural facts. The criterion by which he can judge whether he has correctly known Nature or not is to be found in the laws of understanding itself; or, as Kant puts it, "there is nothing beyond knowledge that we can set up as contrasted with knowledge, and yet as corresponding to it."<sup>1</sup>

To pursue further the suggestions made above will be to expound the Kantian theory of

<sup>1</sup> Watson's *Selections*, p. 60.

knowledge as a whole which is far from our present object. It is widely admitted by the exponents of the critical philosophy that the dream of making Kant consistent will never be realized. Every student of Kant is compelled to follow what he thinks to be the main drift of the master's teaching. The above suggestions are meant to indicate the particular line of interpretation which the critical philosophy admits of, and which may be necessary at a time when distinguished thinkers are offering anti-Kantian interpretations of Kant's categories. The perplexing and apparently contradictory statements in which Kant has couched his thoughts may be open to diverse interpretations equally plausible and sound. But to read realistic meanings into his doctrine of the categories is, we believe, to transfigure his position beyond all recognition.

Allied with the realistic interpretation of the categories there is another misconception which probably has its source in the criticism which the Hegelian Dialectic has received from the critics like Trendelenburg, Von Hartmann and Haym. The chief complaint of Trendelenburg against the claim of the Dialectic Method is that every step of the advance is empirically conditioned. Each of the categories is only an abstraction from the fulness of actuality,

Thought  
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and so craves to escape from this forced position ; and the dialectic method is simply the act by which we retrace our original abstraction. We need not here judge how far Hegel really meant what his critics attribute to him. It is, however, strange that he should have taught a doctrine which is ultimately based on a confusion between thought and existence, or, knowledge and being. But one thing is certain, namely, that he, coming as he did after Kant, could not have meant his categories to be mere abstractions. In fact, the reduction by Hume of the general or universal elements of experience into the contingent psychological result of the particular "perceptions" was due to the abstract method initiated by Locke ; and the wrong conception of the categories was ultimately born of this abstraction. We may illustrate, by a short reference to James Ward's remarks on the categories, the devastating influence of this misconception on epistemology.

It is one of Ward's oft-repeated assertions that immediate experience is concrete living and real, while concepts are abstract and ideal. Thus, with regard to space, time, matter and force, alike, he distinguishes between perceptual realities and abstract conceptions. The trans-subjective object, according to Ward, is "always

in some measure general or abstract; in other words, conceptual."<sup>1</sup> The universal and necessary factors of experience are due to intellectual elaborations, and "the further this intellectual process extends, the more abstract the result; as, for instance, if we were to say not, The sun warms the stone, but Ethereal undulations produce molecular vibrations." And then it is remarked that "however far such operations extend, their results are only valid or objective provided they rest ultimately on a basis of immediate experience." Similarly, with regard to space and time, a distinction, it is held, should be drawn between that which is perceived and that which is conceived, or, again, between the psychological and the epistemological.

Now, the first point that deserves consideration in this connection is the distinction of immediate experience from concepts. It clearly reminds one of the pre-Kantian empiricism with its reduction of thought into mere abstraction, and particularly its emphasis on mere feeling. This theory, however, was at the basis of a philosophy which, according to Green, "was with Hume played out."<sup>2</sup> But the emergence of

<sup>1</sup> *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, II., p. 184,

<sup>2</sup> *Green, Works*, I., p. 371,

the theory in contemporary thought, and the rigorous application of what has so long been supposed to be a false principle to different fields of enquiry can be accounted for only on one hypothesis. Hume has somewhere remarked that when a controversy has been in the field for a considerable time without the prospect of a satisfactory solution, it may be taken as a proof that there is an ambiguity in the terms used by the disputants. And if Hume had lived in our time, he would easily see that the distinction between the function of immediate experience and that of thought in contemporary philosophy is based on a particular sense in which the term 'concrete' is freely used. Nobody can actually deny that there is something in immediate experience which cannot be reduced entirely to mere thought, and in this sense, there is a valuable element of truth in the contention that "if pure being is pure nothing, pure thought is equally empty."<sup>1</sup> A feeling, for instance, that is felt actually at the moment is surely more concrete and living than the concept of feeling, and regarded in this light, conceptual thought is comparatively abstract. But the term 'concrete' also means in philosophical literature

<sup>1</sup> *Psychological Principles*, p. 293,

that which is a whole, and consequently, we are said to make an abstraction when a part is torn out of the whole and then substantiated as a *res completa*. Thus, for instance, the flower as presented to an anoetic consciousness, if such a consciousness exists at all, however immediately apprehended, is not the complete flower as it exists. To know the flower in its existential concreteness, it must be determined in all those multifarious ways, and apprehended through all those fundamental relations which intellectual elaboration or interpretation essentially implies. The sense-presented flower, though it is as immediately grasped as a feeling, is yet an abstract entity; for the obvious reason that sense does not *ex hypothesi* refer it to the conditions under which alone it exists as a real thing. The category of cause, for instance, is one of the conditions that enter into the existence of the flower, though it is not presented, as such, to the immediate experience. In this sense, our conceptual knowledge, far from being abstract and untrue, is emphatically concrete and real; and thought is the principle, not of abstraction, but of concretion.

When in this manner we get rid of the fatal ambiguity lurking in the terms 'concrete' and 'abstract,' it will be easily seen that to condemn the Kantian categories as the 'most

abstract 'concepts'<sup>1</sup> is to accept uncritically an account of the categories and of thought which it has been almost a characteristic feature of empiricism to advocate, both before and after Kant. The *summa genera* of the scholastic philosophers into which the Aristotelian categories degenerated were falsely identified by John Stuart Mill with the categories as the ultimate presuppositions of knowledge and existence. And it is regrettable that the false view is not entirely rejected even by such an acute critic of presentationism as Ward undoubtedly is. Here, again, we are inclined to believe that the ultimate reason of Ward's failure is to be found in his biological bias. Attention, the single activity supposed to belong to the subject, is conceived as analogous to, though not identical with, the response of the organism to its environment. And this prevents Ward from seeing the real nature of the interpreting, the organizing or the synthesizing thought. It is true that, according to him, there is a synthesizing or integrating process which "is begun at the lower or

<sup>1</sup> *Psychological Principles*, p. 293. Ward is certainly right when he says that "what is epistemologically the most fundamental is the last to be psychologically realised." But he is as certainly wrong in so far as he thinks that the validity of the abstract concepts depends on immediate experience.

perceptual level of experience and continued at the higher or intellectual level,"<sup>1</sup> but this process is wrongly identified with the activity of attention and the tendency to anthropomorphic interpretation. Knowledge being the process through which the world exists for us, it is extremely misleading to view the interpreting process of thought as merely the process of differentiating and integrating an objective continuum.

None can afford to forget here Green's remark that there is a wrong view of the categories and a right one. "The right one regards them as the relations or formal conceptions, without which there would be no knowledge and no objective world to be known. They are not the end but the beginning of knowledge, not ultimate truths, but truths which we already know in knowing anything, though the correct disentanglement of them is in one sense the great problem of philosophy. The wrong view goes along with the false notion that the essential of thought is abstraction. According to one they are really apart from the objects of ordinary knowledge and experience, and are known by abstraction from these; according to the other, all objects of

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on cate-  
gories.

<sup>1</sup> *A Study of Kant*, p. 80.

ordinary knowledge and experience are determinations of them, so that we know them in knowing the former, though we do not know that we know them."<sup>1</sup> This brings out clearly the deficiencies of the empirical attitude towards experience, an attitude which is characteristic of all minds so long as they do not care to step beyond the "face-value" of the things of experience. It is the distinctive feature of empiricism to take experience as an ultimate fact without enquiring into those conditions which make experience possible, and the consequence is that these transcendental factors of experience are supposed to be either mere "creatures of mind" or mere "features of the world." In fact Locke's view of categories as mere creatures of mind to which nothing corresponds in nature, and Prof. Alexander's interpretation of them as mere pervasive features of the world to which nothing corresponds in mind, are based on a common assumption—an assumption which melted away under Kant's analysis of knowledge.

Thus, subjectivism and objectivism appear to meet on a common error, namely, the error of separating the logical forms from the forms of existence. But scepticism is the logical

<sup>1</sup> *Works, Vol. II., p. 207.*

nemesis of the separation of the ultimate laws of thought from the laws of existence. This may be easily seen if we raise the all-important question—How do we *know* that there are pervasive features of the world? We cannot examine every bit of Space-Time, and then conclude that certain features are pervasive. If, on the other hand, the conclusion is based on the observation of a limited number of such bits of Space-Time, then, surely, it would be, as Bacon would call it, a childish affair. Such observations may generate what Hume would call a subjective tendency, but not logical necessity. But, it is sometimes suggested that there is no logical necessity apart from psychological necessity, and so Hume is believed to have said in this respect all that can possibly be said. This suggestion, however, needs a careful examination in view of the wide popularity it enjoys with eminent thinkers of our time. And we may perhaps best discuss it by restricting ourselves to the Law of Contradiction.

In rejecting what he thinks to be the Kantian account of the *a priori* elements of experience, Mr. Bertrand Russell<sup>1</sup> observes that there are strong reasons for thinking that the view which led to the "laws of thought" being so named is erroneous. For, "what we believe when we

Some objections against the laws of thought considered.

<sup>1</sup> *The Problems of Philosophy*, p. 136,



believe the law of contradiction, is not that the mind is so made that it must believe the law of contradiction. *This* belief is a subsequent result of psychological reflection; which presupposes the belief in the law of contradiction." Mr. Russell, however, does not say explicitly that it is a law of things in abstraction from thought. On the contrary, he insists that "the belief in the law of contradiction is a belief about things, *not only about thoughts*."<sup>1</sup> In so far as this is the case, he really subscribes to the Kantian view. Kant could never be persuaded to imagine that the *a priori* forms of experience are mere subjective beliefs. On the contrary, he waged a continued warfare against this doctrine. When, therefore, it is said that the *a priori* forms belong to the constitution of the mind, what is meant is, *not* that they are purely subjective, but that they are the ways in which we are compelled to think in thinking of any object of experience. And it must be acknowledged that the only criterion, in the last resort, by which we can distinguish between the fanciful and the objective is whether we are obliged to think in a particular way. To such critics of Kant as think that "ideal construction is a contradiction in terms,

<sup>1</sup> Italics not in the original.

unless it refers solely to mental imagining,"<sup>1</sup> we must respectfully reply, in the words of Green, that "it is not understood that his doctrine of *a priori* forms of experience refers not to subjective beliefs but to those relations of phenomena which are necessary to the existence of a knowable objective world."<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Russell's contentions, however, are not simply this that "the law of contradiction is about things, and not merely about thoughts"; but he urges further that "the fact that we were compelled to *think* it true would not save the law of contradiction from being false; and this shows that the law is not a law of *thought*." That is, while he seems to concede, in the first instance, that the law of contradiction is a law of thought as well as of things, yet, he proceeds to conclude that this law is not a law of thought at all. What he seems to mean, as far as we understand him, is that the law of contradiction is a law of things, even if we had not thought consistently about things; and, conversely, even if we had been compelled to think in a particular way, that by itself, would not prove

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Russell's  
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ments.

<sup>1</sup> E.g., H. A. Prichard: *Kant's Ethics of Knowledge*, p. 244.

<sup>2</sup> *Works*, Vol. III., p. 129. Cf. L. tze, *Logic*, II., p. 314; Bonsanquet, *Contemporary Philosophy*, p. 176.

that our thought was true. If this be all that he means, then, we believe, his contentions are surely unchallengeable. That the things must be self-consistent wholes, even if our thoughts about them, at a particular stage of knowledge, are incoherent is, as we have frequently urged above, a fundamental condition or presupposition of knowledge. Similarly, it is also true that there is a compulsion under which thought works even when it leads to an erroneous conclusion.

But, we submit, this does not show that the law of contradiction is not a law of thought. All that follows from the above contentions is that we sometimes think of things erroneously, and that the false thought has its psychological conditions. That is, our thoughts are often incoherent, though we are not conscious of the fact that they are so. But, in spite of this regrettable fact, it remains true that we are compelled to condemn an incoherent thought as false when, and in so far as, we become conscious of its internal incoherence. The entire arguments of Russell thus appear to be vitiated by a confusion between laws of thought and the consciousness of the laws of thought. It is undeniable that the stream of consciousness is not always determined by the law of contradiction ; on the contrary, it often

washes off the embankments of logic. It is equally true that we may think consistently without knowing that we are doing so; and Locke was so far surely right in remarking that "God has not been so sparing to men to make them barely two-legged creatures, and left it to Aristotle to make them rational."<sup>1</sup> But Locke's confusion on this head was due, partly to his assumption that nothing is in the mind of which it is not clearly conscious, and partly to his attempt to solve the question of validity of the principles of knowledge by showing their empirical origin. He was, however, as has been since found out, wrong in his assumption and unsuccessful in his attempt. With regard to the identification of mind with consciousness, it has been urged by thinkers from Leibniz onward, that mental elements need not necessarily be conscious elements. Similarly, the hollowness of his attempt to test validity by reference to origin has been recognised by philosophers from Kant downward. That is, even if it be granted that the child is not conscious of the law of contradiction, it does not follow from this that its thoughts are never governed by that law, or that it accepts contradictory statements about

<sup>1</sup> *Essay*, bk. iv, chap. xvii, sec. 4.

things to be true when it does come to be conscious of the contradictions.

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There is another type of arguments which are regarded by some contemporary thinkers as showing that the law of contradiction is not an axiom of our thought. Thus, for instance, Professor Alexander, while admitting that what is self-contradictory is downright false, argues that "the reason why nothing can be real which contradicts itself is not that this is an axiom of our thought, but that reality since it occupies a space-time does not occupy a different one."<sup>1</sup> So, the law of contradiction, for him, derives its validity not from any self-evidence, "but from the experiential or empirical nature of Space-Time."

But the problem which clamours for a solution here is the old problem of Hume, namely, how can we universalise an empirical generalisation that is based on the observation of a limited number of particular cases? If the law of contradiction is supposed to derive its validity from the observed bits of space-time, then, it is after all a habit of expectation, a mere subjective tendency; and, as such, it cannot guarantee the validity of the universal proposition that whatever is self-contradictory

<sup>1</sup> *Space, etc., I., p. 206.*

is, as is admitted, downright false. We need not add further comments on Prof. Alexander's arguments beyond observing that J. S. Mill was under a serious delusion when he thought that the Uniformity of Nature which he admitted to be the basis of all inductive inferences was itself the result of enumerative induction which, again, he himself condemned as induction improperly so called. And Mill might have felt the necessity of revising his account of the Uniformity of Nature, if he had given any serious thought to his predecessor's pregnant observation that "all arguments concerning existence are founded on the relation of cause and effect; that our knowledge of that relation is derived entirely from experience; and that all our experimental conclusions proceed upon the supposition that the future will be conformable to the past. To endeavour, therefore, the proof of this last supposition by probable arguments, or arguments regarding existence, must be evidently going in a circle, and taking that for granted, which is the very point in question."<sup>1</sup>

It need not, however, be denied that the self-evidence of the law of contradiction is not evident in its abstract form until there is an

<sup>1</sup> Hume, *Enquiry*, Section IV, Part II.

empirical fact to be observed. That is, as Locke rightly observes, the child who has never heard of the law of contradiction knows that an apple is not fire, and this implies that the apple cannot be fire. And here there is already an implicit knowledge of the law, though it is not conscious that it is implicit in its thought. It is, however, only when it comes to be explicitly conscious of what was implicit before that the law of contradiction appears as self-evident. But this does not show that the self-evidence has been *derived* from the particular case. Professor Alexander here seems to be guilty of the same confusion as Mr. Russell, namely, the confusion between a law of thought and the consciousness of that law. In fact, thought is nothing if it be not the intellectual tendency to unify or systematize ; it is because there is this *nisus* of thought towards a unity that the apparent contradictions in the data of experience force upon it the task of fresh interpretation.

Mr.  
Stout's  
argu-  
ments.

It is, therefore, extremely misleading to say that the law of contradiction is not a law of thought, or, that the validity of the law of contradiction is derived from the empirical nature of space-time. There seems to be essentially the same confusion in the contentions of another acute thinker of our time. Professor

G. F. Stout appears, in his recently published Gifford Lectures, to distinguish sharply between evidence and experience when he urges emphatically that "it is a fundamental error to suppose that the general maxim has any evidence of its own independent of its special cases."<sup>1</sup> "Even the Law of Contradiction," it is said, "is self-evident only in experience and not independently of experience." Now, if it means, as it often seems to mean, that the necessity of the general maxims cannot be recognised except in so far as they are applied to special cases, then, he is essentially expressing the same truth which Kant sought to convey by his remark that in the order of time, we have no knowledge prior to experience, and with experience all our knowledge begins. But Mr. Stout appears also to contend that the evidence of the maxims is derived from the particular cases, and this is suggested by his remarks that there is in the long run no self-evidence which is not the evidence from the nature of the case, and that the maxim has no evidence which is independent of the evidence of the particular instance. In so far as this latter contention is concerned, Kant might well make the same comment here as he had made on empiricism,

<sup>1</sup> *Mind & Matter*, p. 194,



namely, "although all our knowledge begins *with* experience, it by no means follows that it all originates *from* experience." That is, it is no doubt true that the law of contradiction can be apprehended only in particular instances, and so the child, as Mr. Stout rightly holds, is in a position to grasp its meaning only after it has gone through such processes as comparison and abstraction. But it does not follow from this that the law derives its self-evidence or logical necessity from the particular instances, and is in this sense dependent for its validity on the special cases.

We may perhaps elucidate further our contentions in another way. Every intelligent assertion must possess an internal consistency; that is, the predicate and the subject should have inner harmony between themselves. It must also be in harmony with all other assertions which, together with it, claim to be true of reality. Again, every assertion implies the falsity of its contradictory, and so the truth-claim of an assertion has implicit in it the falsity of a number of assertions which make a contradictory claim. This property of an assertion by which it excludes the truth of other assertions has its root in the incapacity of thought to violate the law of contradiction, and this incapacity of thought when positively

stated, is what we have called the *nisus* of thought towards the unity or whole. It follows from this that none who makes an intelligent assertion with a truth-claim can abandon the law of contradiction, though he may not be explicitly conscious of the law. Repeating the words which Kant uses in relation to the fundamental conceptions of knowledge, we may, therefore, say that that which makes an assertion possible is for that very reason necessary. And every attempt, therefore, to derive its necessity from the observation of particular assertions is bound to be vitiated by 'a sort of *generatio aequivoca*.' That is, all theories of empirical origin of the law of contradiction must contain the naturalistic fallacy of taking that for granted which it seeks to show to be the result of experience.

When it is thought, for instance, that the law of contradiction is not an axiom of thought, this assertion implies the falsity of another assertion, namely, that the law of contradiction is an axiom of thought, and *vice versa*. The law being thus implicit in every assertion, positive and negative, its validity is re-asserted in the very attempt to deny it. Hence, again, its necessity and universality are not contingent on a child, or even a philosopher, being conscious of its presence or self-evidence. That is,

it may not be self-evident in the sense that every one who makes an assertion is explicitly conscious of the law in its abstract form. Yet, it is the ground or necessary presupposition of every assertion, and so its validity is not empirically derived from the observation of a number of instances. What then is the source of the law of contradiction? In view of what has so far been said, it is easy to see that there can be but one answer to it, and it is the traditional answer that thought is the source of the law of contradiction; that is, thought is so made that it cannot accept conflicts and contradictions as being ultimate, hence arises the need for interpretation and re-interpretation.

Returning now to the distinction between the psychological and the logical necessity with which we started above, it may be observed that the former is generated by experience and is entirely contingent, for, as Kant remarked, every conception which is merely empirical is just as contingent as the experience from which it was derived. The law of contradiction, on the other hand, is the basis of every intelligible assertion and every bit of intelligent experience. You may repeat a contradictory assertion a thousand times, but that will not alter your conviction about its logical

absurdity; conversely, when the assertion is made intelligible by removing its inner inconsistencies, your conviction about its logical fitness will not be strengthened by repetition. Logical connections, therefore, once true, are always true; psychological connections, on the other hand, owe their strength to repeated observations. "No laws," it has been very aptly remarked by Bosanquet, "which speak in the tone of first principles of thought and reality can be founded on the observation of the psychical habits of a species."<sup>1</sup> In this connection, it is difficult to overestimate the value of Mr. H. W. B. Joseph's remark that though in fact we cannot think except in accordance with the laws of thought, yet they are really statements which we cannot but hold true about things.<sup>2</sup>

Kant's own views on the whole subject may be gathered from his remark on the idea of cause. "No doubt we cannot have a logically clear idea of cause," it is admitted, "until we have made use of it in experience, but it is none the less true, that a tacit reference to that rule . . . . was the foundation of experience itself, and therefore preceded

<sup>1</sup> *Implication and Linear Inference*, p. 144,

<sup>2</sup> *Introduction to Logic*, p. 13,

it *a priori*."<sup>1</sup> What Kant says here with regard to the idea of cause may very well be taken as representing his views on all the fundamental principles of thought and existence.

The only point which should be noted here is that when conceptions are said to precede experience *a priori*, what is meant is not that they are psychologically prior in the sense that in the order of time they precede experience. They are *a priori* in the sense that their validity is presupposed by every theory of experience, no matter when such a theory comes to be constructed. They are in this sense the transcendental factors of experience, and not transcendent in the sense that they can give us knowledge of a world beyond the world of space and time.

<sup>1</sup> Watson's *Selections*, p. 115.

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## CHAPTER VIII

### The First Principles of Knowledge

The fairly elaborate discussion on the Law of Contradiction which was undertaken in the last chapter may now be turned to account for the removal of the widespread notion that the Kantian theory of the *a priori* elements of knowledge has, for contemporary thinkers, nothing more than a purely historical interest, so that his opinions are to be respectfully collected, carried into the dissecting room, given a decent burial, and then incorporated in the obituary list. We believe, on the contrary, that the list has been rather hastily drawn, for, the deadliest missiles supplied by the most up-to-date armoury have left practically unhurt the vital part of the Kantian theory.

The nature of the first Principles.

If our contentions about the Law of Contradiction be correct, it may then be easy to alleviate some of the serious difficulties that are still felt about the essentials of Kant's theory of knowledge. The most important part of his theory, as we have already suggested, is embodied in the brief observation that

conceptions which make experience possible are for that very reason necessary. In the light of our explanations of the Law of Contradiction we may now easily see that Kant's position is not really so perplexing and paradoxical as it appears to be to a superficial view. The ultimate conceptions of thought are the pre-suppositions or the ground of every theory of reality, much as the Law of Contradiction is the ground of every assertion. There can be no assertion which does not already take for granted the universal and necessary validity of the laws of thought; similarly, no theory of reality can ultimately reject the universality and necessity of the ultimate principles of knowledge. Again, like the laws of thought, the principles of 'understanding', according to which we interpret Nature, are also the forms of existence. That is, the ultimate features of whatever exists are known through the logical necessity of thought; and so, if the ultimate laws of existence were different from the ultimate principles according to which we cannot help interpreting the data of sense or the data furnished by commonsense, existence would reduce itself to a veritable thing-in-itself and the separation of thought from existence would be absolute. But such an absolute separation is inconceivable, for,

to think of an existence which is opposed to the laws of thought is to admit that we are not thinking of it at all.

The defect of every theory of the origin of these ultimate principles of thought, according to Kant, is then to confuse 'physiological derivation' with 'deduction,' and this confusion "can only be made by one who does not understand the altogether peculiar nature of these cognitions."<sup>1</sup> That is, even if it be granted that the Principle of Causality, for instance, has a genesis in the sense that it is the last to be psychologically realised by an experiencing individual, that does not prove that the Principle is universally and necessarily valid. Even our false beliefs have their psychological conditions and have so far a subjective necessity. But the logical necessity is not proved by a subjective belief.

Kant's reply to those who confuse psychology with epistemology may be summed up in the following way. A conception is universally and necessarily true when its validity is implied by every attempt to give a systematic and coherent account of whatever is real and hence, in so far as the psychological account of the genesis of

An outline  
of Kant's  
reply to  
Hume.

<sup>1</sup> *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Meiklejohn's translation, p. 73.



a given conception claims to be a coherent account of a real process, the universal validity of the conception is presupposed by even the psychological theory. The Principles of Unity and Causality, for instance, are universally valid, *not* because the experiencing individual comes to possess these conceptions at a particular stage in its life-history, when, that is, it reaches the trans-subjective level of experience. But they are objectively valid because this entire process of the development of experience loses all its meaning for us if it be not interpretable in terms of unity and causality; in other words, the process of development is unthinkable or unrealisable by one who does not presuppose the universal and necessary validity of the Principles of Unity and Causality.

Anything like a detailed explanation of Kant's arguments in respect of the Principles of Unity and Causality is unnecessary at this place, as the work has been admirably done by a large number of Kant's exponents and commentators. We have only emphasised here the crucial point in the great movement of thought from Hume to Kant, and the ~~radical~~ radical change of outlook which Kant's analysis of knowledge brought about by raising the problem of first principles. If the categories are admitted to be the first

principles of knowledge, then, no knowledge is possible which does not implicitly or explicitly presuppose their validity. The only other alternative is to deny altogether that there is really any such fundamental principles of knowledge. Thus, Kant and Hume, as we have already urged, exhaust between themselves the possible alternatives of the disjunctive swing of human thought.

Consequently, the really important problem is whether knowledge has its presuppositions or not. We have tried in the last chapter to show that every assertion, positive as well as negative, has its presupposition which is generally known as the Law of Contradiction, though it is not always before our consciousness. And this remains true whether the Law of Contradiction be formal or material, concrete or abstract, analytic or synthetic, for, even these discussions presuppose the Law. Now, the Principle of Unity is ultimately the Law of Contradiction when it is applied to the data of experience; that is, the category of unity underlies the intellectual urge to remove inconsistencies from knowledge and experience. Thus, Bosanquet, for instance, observes rightly that the principle of non-contradiction is but "another form of words for the principle that the Truth is the whole,"<sup>1</sup>

The categories are modes of unification.

<sup>1</sup> *Logic, II.*, p. 265,

And every other category including the category of cause is the way in which we necessarily introduce unity into the data of experience or knowledge. In this respect, again, it has been aptly remarked that, for Kant, a category is "always a function of unity whereby contents are interpreted."<sup>1</sup>

Some remarks of Caird are so pertinent to our contention here that we need not apologize for citing them. "It is obvious," he says, "that of all that is knowable we must be able to predicate whatever is involved in its being knowable, and that such predicates will take precedence of all others, and will determine or limit the sense in which they are to be understood. From this point of view, therefore, there seem to be certain assertions which we may make in regard to the world and to every object in it, independently of its being actually known,—assertions which will not be altered or modified by any increase of our actual knowledge, or by any change of our view of those particular objects which we already know."<sup>2</sup> To put it briefly, Knowledge has its presuppositions to deny the validity of which is to make every assertion about the real world unintelligible.

<sup>1</sup> N. K. Smith, *Commentary*, p. 178.

<sup>2</sup> *Critical Philosophy*, I., p. 8.

Before proceeding further, we may now turn as promised above,<sup>1</sup> to Maimon's criticism of Kant's reply to Hume. It may perhaps be realised clearly, in the light of what we have so far said about the nature of the categories, that Maimon, with all his acuteness and insight, entirely missed the real nature of Kant's transcendental enquiries. What he did not see was that Kant had raised the ultimate problem of the possibility of knowledge, and showed that even scepticism had its own presuppositions, and that all semi-sceptical derivation of these presuppositions of knowledge from empirical observation would involve a sort of *hysteron proteron*. Kant's contention here cannot be perhaps better summed up than in the words of Green. No one, it is remarked, has pursued the method of empirical psychology "with stricter promises, or made a fairer show of being faithful to them, than Hume. He will begin with simple feeling, as first experienced by the individual—unqualified by complex conceptions, physical or metaphysical, of matter or of mind—and trace the process by which it generates the ideas of philosophical relations." But this is impossible, because, "even when thus pursued, its semblance of success is due to the

Maimon's misconception of the first principles.

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, p. 169.

fact that, by interpreting the earliest consciousness in terms of the latest, it puts the latter in place of the former.”<sup>1</sup>

That is, thought as the principle of systematization necessarily enters into all knowledge, and this irrespective of the objects known. Whether the universe be in reality a “block universe,” or a never-ending process of becoming, whether it be the creative march of event-particles or the continuous emergence of new qualities out of a space-time matrix, whether lastly it be only a stage for the mad dance of electrons or an unforeseeable spontaneous outburst of the *elan vital*, the mere fact that we are committed to an intelligible description of the universe implies that thought constitutes its very essence and that there is no dualism between thought and reality.<sup>2</sup> This, we claim, was the upshot of Kant’s theory of knowledge,

<sup>1</sup> *Works, I., p. 166.*

<sup>2</sup> This of course does not mean that thought and reality are identical or that reality is only thought materialized. On the contrary, it has all along been our endeavour to distinguish between Reality and Thought, and if we say that there is no dualism between them, all that we mean is that the existential reality must necessarily express itself through thought or that the universe is spread out on a rational plan.

though it is none of our purpose to justify that Kant was always consistent with this inevitable conclusion of his analysis of the knowledge situation.

Maimon's failure to appreciate the reply, which has been widely shared by contemporary thinkers, is due to the fatal assumption that Kant undertook the laborious investigation into the possibility of knowledge from the standpoint of psychology in order to show that Hume's derivation of the causal concept was essentially invalid and imperfect. So far as the psychological question is concerned,<sup>1</sup> the real reply to Hume, we believe, has been given not by Kant, but by the critics of presentationism and associationism. But the nature of the transcendental deduction will ever remain a closed chapter to us if we continue to regard it as a chapter in psychology. How we have, as a matter of history, come to the consciousness of the causal concept, as Kant warns his readers in the beginning of the famous deduction, is not to vindicate our right to the use of that concept in interpreting an object. Similarly, when Maimon points out that the forms of knowledge can be discovered only by way of experience, and from this argues that experience can

<sup>1</sup> See *supra*, p. 159.

guarantee neither the completeness nor the necessity of the categories, it may be respectfully retorted that Kant knew as much as his critic that "the analysis of the experiences in which they are met with is not deduction, but only an illustration of them, because from experience they could never derive the attribute of necessity."<sup>1</sup> The question here is not one of empirical derivation. It is true that in presenting his arguments Kant does make use of expressions which have only a psychological import. But whatever justification there might be for Maimon to read into Kant's deduction a purely psychological meaning, there is no valid excuse for contemporary thinkers to ignore the value of Caird's remark that Kant's deduction is a process of argument which reconstitutes its own premises, and that Kant himself often refers to it "though perhaps he does not keep it so steadily before him as might be desired."<sup>2</sup>

If we then do not confuse the empirical with the transcendental deduction, it is necessary to avoid the mistake of the "celebrated Locke" and David Hume, and to realize clearly that the categories are, as Kant is never tired of

<sup>1</sup> *The Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by Meiklejohn, p. 78.

<sup>2</sup> *The Critical Philosophy*, I, p. 475.

insisting, "conceptions of an object in general." His reply to Hume does not consist in a mere criticism of Hume's psychology; but it consists essentially in showing that no psychological account of experience can lay claim to intelligibility which does not presuppose the necessity and universal validity of the categories, particularly of the categories of unity and causality. Even Hume, while ostensibly engaged in showing the derivation of the causal concept, had to present that derivation in terms of causality, and expected his readers to believe that the invariable perception *generates* in us habits and expectations. What is this notion of generation if it is not one of causation? It may be similarly shown that Hume had to presuppose the validity of all other categories in order to make their derivation intelligible. It is unnecessary to justify our conclusion in detail after the masterly criticism with which Green introduces Hume's readers into the *Treatise of Human Nature*. But in view of the current misinterpretations of Kant's theory of knowledge, it may be useful to remember that it was never Kant's contention that the categories are clearly recognized at all the levels of experience and by all of us at every moment of our life. On the contrary, it is only in moments of reflexion that they are realized to



be present in our experience. Kant's principles of the pure understanding, as Caird sees with his characteristic acumen, are not present "to the ordinary empirical consciousness, any more than the principles of Grammar are present to everyone who can give expression to his ideas in language. The kind of consciousness to which such principles are present in their abstract form, and in which they are deliberately used as guides in the scientific investigation of phenomena, is a result of reflexion."<sup>1</sup>

Restric-  
tion of  
freedom  
in philo-  
sophical  
thinking.

The elaborate details with which Hume's position has been developed in contemporary thought, and the new ramifications of Hume's theory of knowledge, as we have contended above, are due to a serious oversight which prevents contemporary thinkers from realizing the exact nature of the transition from Hume to Kant. The essence of this transition, we are rightly told by Green, consists in showing that "the philosophy based on the abstraction of feeling, in regard to morals no less than to nature, was with Hume played out, and that the next step forward in speculation could only be an effort to re-think the process of nature and human action from its true beginning in thought."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p. 479.

<sup>2</sup> *Works*, I., p. 371.

Green therefore recommends the study of Kant and Hegel to every student of philosophy who will care to take the "step forward in speculation" and to leave behind the pre-Kantian "anachronistic systems." Our age, however, heedless of the warning, and perhaps inspired by the ideal of an infinite progress, is restlessly seeking to take another forward step beyond the philosophy based on thought which is generally condemned as barren intellectualism. Thus the intuitionist and the voluntarist, the romanticist and the pragmatist, in spite of their internal differences, have presented a united front against the intellectualist. If, however, Kant's reply to Hume be correct—and it is our firm belief that it is correct and final—then every theory of knowledge which begins with an initial repudiation of the competence of thought must represent a retrograde step in speculation. In analysing experience from different standpoints and thus bringing together the logical implicates of experience, Kant, we are strongly of opinion, laid down once for all the general scheme of every intelligible discourse. The scheme has no doubt been developed by his followers on lines that were not clearly realised by Kant himself. But the general outline remains the same, and all subsequent developments have been of the

nature of filling up details. A philosopher can surely claim the right to think in a different way from another ; but this claim for intellectual freedom cannot exempt him from restrictions which thought puts upon itself. These restrictions enter into the very essence of thought, and so every intelligible assertion must fall within the scheme.

James  
Ward on  
Kant's  
analysis.

It will not be possible at this place to enter upon a detailed orientation of the manifold directions in which contemporary philosophy tends, almost in the spirit of Maimon, to under-rate the value of Kant's reply to Hume. Nor is it necessary to expose the fallacies of Kant's critics, such as Schopenhauer, Hutchison Stirling and others, after what has been already done by many able exponents of Kant's philosophy. It is, however, unfortunate that, in spite of all that has been done 'in this direction, there is still a distinct tendency in contemporary philosophy to commit the same fallacy. Thus, for instance, James Ward would condemn all attempts at the deduction of the categories as unconvincing and worthless. Out of the innumerable grounds he offers for such a damaging and sweeping observation, we may briefly consider (1) his contentions against what he calls Kant's Copernican position, and (2) his remark that any deduction is bound to

remain unsatisfactory and incomplete which is not preceded by a psychology from the over-individual standpoint.

To begin with the second point, Ward's main argument seems to be that as all experiments are not self-conscious, it is first of all necessary to account for self-consciousness and thus solve the question of origin, before we may hope to understand the sense in which the categories are objectively valid. It is true, he admits, that the human perception, "is, of course, for us the nearest, the highest and the clearest;" but, unfortunately, "epistemology has not merely started from the human level as it must, but it has tended to assume that this intellectual level is where knowledge itself begins."<sup>1</sup> The result is that it has failed to see that there are successive stages in the advance from one level of experience to another, and that "both reflexion and reasoning are the result of social intercourse," so that each man by himself is not rational but "humanity has achieved rationality,"<sup>2</sup> When this is clearly seen, the categories will appear to be "the result of that reflective self-consciousness to which social intercourse first gives rise."<sup>3</sup> But

<sup>1</sup> *Mind*, xxviii. 1919, p. 268.

<sup>2</sup> *The Psychological Principles*, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

neither Kant nor Locke "realised how much what they called their 'own mind' was what it was in consequence of heredity, tradition and their social environment."<sup>1</sup> The result is that Kant's subjective deduction lacks the needful psychological basis, and in his objective deductive he has "to content himself with showing barely as a matter of fact the connexion that exists between *a priori*—that is universal and necessary—knowledge and self-consciousness... It was a true instinct, therefore, that led Kant to seek first to solve this question of origin. But for the reasons given he failed, and in stead of setting about providing himself with 'a genuine 'transcendental psychology' he got lost in a maze of transcendental faculties supposed to be hidden in the depth of the individual soul; but, in fact, assumed chiefly because he saw no way of getting on without them."<sup>2</sup>

The concept of evolution, and its influence on the study of mind.

Before commenting on Ward's attempt to provide a 'transcendental psychology' of the origin of the categories as a preliminary to the problem of their validity, we would like to remark that it is none of our purpose to defend or to attack the widely respected opinion that, as a matter of history, the self-conscious level

<sup>1</sup> *A Study of Kant*, p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

has been attained at a particular stage of mental development of the psychological individual. The concept of evolution, which is the ruling conception of our age, has illumined many a dark corner of the different sciences, and there is no reason why philosophers should not be able to turn it to account in respect of their special purpose. If the nebular hypothesis of Laplace has been successful in mechanics, if the concept of evolution has made valuable contributions in geology at the hands of Lyell, if it has been successfully applied to biological phenomena by a large number of eminent scientists, such as Lamarck, St. Hilaire, Cuvier, Erasmus Darwin and Charles Darwin, there is apparently no reason why it should not yield equally valuable results in the field of psychology and the sister sciences, such as anthropology, sociology and social psychology. And, in fact, the concept of development has been turned to profitable account in the study of mind, and the result may be perhaps summed up in the brief observation of Prof. L. T. Hobhouse, namely, that "the human mind, like the human body, is the outcome of a long and highly specialized evolution."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Mind in Evolution*, p. 369.

The confidence which the success of the evolutionary concept in different fields of knowledge has inspired in our psychologists may be seen from the revolutionary remarks of Prof. W. McDougall—"If the behaviour and the emotions of the dog and the horse and the ape were as obscure to us as those of the bees, we should in spite of all morphological homologies, hesitate to accept the theory of the continuity of human with animal evolution. But, in face of the success, we cannot deny our continuity of nature with our humble relatives ; and the theory of evolution affords the best explanation of that continuity."<sup>1</sup> It is recommended, therefore, that the students of human nature should definitely abandon the notion that while each species of animal was "endowed with such faculties and organs as seemed best to its Creator," Man alone was "endowed with Reason."

This picture of the place and function of man and Reason, howsoever humiliating for human dignity, need not be rejected on merely sentimental grounds. And in fact it has been accepted, with more or less reservations, by philosophers of all ages and countries. And though it is true that some idealists have been

<sup>1</sup> *Outline of Psychology*. third edition, p. 129.

altogether uncompromising in their polemic against naturalism, there are not wanting even to this day philosophers of admitted merits who, while rejecting what they call the lower naturalism, would still agree with A.S. Pringle-Pattison in holding that "life and self-consciousness appear to emerge from antecedent conditions in which these distinctive qualities cannot be detected."<sup>1</sup> Only, we should not insist on "treating them as *no more* than the inorganic or non-rational phenomena which form their antecedents." In other words, "every evolutionary process must be read in the light of its last term."<sup>2</sup>

This higher naturalism, as is well known, is representative of all the teleological explanations that have been offered from the time of Aristotle ; and though some philosophers, such as Bergson, would condemn teleology as an inverted mechanism, it still commands a wide reputation, especially with the idealists. And so far as self-consciousness is concerned, it has been recognised by no less an idealist than E. Caird that "a social community of life is presupposed in our first consciousness of ourselves as individual persons."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Idea of God*, p. 93.

<sup>2</sup> *Idid.*, p. 106.

<sup>3</sup> *Critical Philosophy*, II., p. 371,



But evolution does not solve the problem of knowledge.

Our difficulty in following the evolutionary genesis begins to be felt, however, when philosophers, not content with remarking that thought or reason is the last result of evolutionary process, go to the length of contending that the *validity* of rational knowledge has to be tested in the light of the *genesis* of reason. This contention amounts to saying that reasoned knowledge of the genesis of reason cannot be true if that knowledge be not based upon a sound theory of genesis. But, in that case, how can we ever be sure of the soundness of a given genetic theory? If Kant, for instance, failed in proving the objective validity of the categories for the lack of a psychology of 'universal mind', then it appears to be difficult to test the validity of such a psychology when it claims to give a true description of the different levels of experience. Are we then to accept a theory of the psychological genesis like the oracles of Delphi or the divine message from an oriental sanctuary?

It presupposes the validity of reason.

It will perhaps be conceded that every theory of biological or psychological evolution need not necessarily be true, simply because it is an evolutionary theory. Such a theory may, like the biogenetic law of Haeckel according to which ontogeny repeats phylogeny, may exercise an enormous influence on popular

imagination. But in so far as it claims to be true of facts, its truth-value is open to criticism. Such a rational scrutiny, however, would be impossible if we start by questioning the validity of the categories or laws of thought. And, in fact, it is not at all difficult to show that all attempts to test the validity of thought on the basis of its genesis have been vitiated by the same fallacy of *hysteron proteron* which made Hume's experiment a colossal failure. And if there is any moral which we can draw from Hume's experiment, it is this that every attempt to criticise thought *ab extra* is futile.

We need not stop here to show in detail how James Ward has taken for granted the objective validity of those very categories in his elaborate theory of the development of the psychological individual, which he sought to criticise from the standpoint of psychology. We may only urge, reversing his remarks on the distinction between the psychological and the epistemological *a priori*, that the knowledge of categories is not psychologically *a priori*, it is no concern of the epistemologist either to assert or to deny. They are at least epistemologically *a priori* in the sense that their validity has to be taken for granted by every systematic account of reality. In fact, however, Ward appears sometimes to see this clearly,

when, for instance, he remarks that "Kant rightly rejects all theories of the exclusively empirical (*i.e.*, *sentient*) origin of concepts as naturalistic—'a sort of *generatio aequivoca*' of pure reason."<sup>1</sup> But he is prevented, probably by his psychological bias created by a long training in the biological sciences, from working out to its legitimate consequences all that is implied in this valuable insight. The result is that he persists in believing that psychology can afford a sound foundation for epistemology.

Idealistic  
criticism  
of natura-  
lism.

It may be useful to repeat here that nothing which has been so far said is meant to decide on the issue which divides the temporalist from the eternalist. That is, our contentions would be true even if we had not acquiesced in the uncompromising criticism of naturalism by such idealists, as Green, namely, that "a natural history of self-consciousness, and of the conceptions by which it makes the world its own, is impossible,"<sup>2</sup> Whether thought and its categories are eternal or not, it remains true that thought cannot be criticised *ab extra*. It has been no doubt argued by philosophers from Anaxagoras and Plato to the modern idealists that the ordering *Nous* which alone is endowed with spontaneous activity is the eternal intelli-

<sup>1</sup> *A Study of Kant*, p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> Green, *Works*, I, p. 263.

gence or reason. Even Descartes believed in the Platonic and Aristotelian conception of eternal reason, and thus supposed that thought essentially belonged to human soul apart from a body, so that nothing empirical could form the essence of mind. Similarly, idealists have inferred the reality of an Eternal Thought or Spirit from the undeniable fact that all things and all that is real, including history itself, are intelligible only in terms of thought.

Our present concern, however, has been to show that even if it be granted that thought and self-consciousness have a history, yet, that history itself implies the universal validity of the conceptions of thought. And so far we may remark, agreeing with Bosanquet, that it is necessary "to shake off all bias and prejudice against special forms of appearance,"<sup>1</sup> for, "all this is a mere distinction of dates of appearance."<sup>2</sup> Our contentions will be clear if we remember that all our surmises about the past history of man, howsoever confirmed by biology and comparative psychology, do not help us in the least in getting rid of our present intellectual framework. Granted that the pre-human history of the world has, in the course of evolution and under the stress of an *elan*

Concep-  
tions  
must be  
valid even  
if they  
be not  
eternal.

<sup>1</sup> *The Principle of Individuality and Value*, p. 318.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 322.

*vital*, or a space-time matrix, or, later on, through heredity, social environment and inter-subjective intercourse, produced man with his present highly complex conceptual framework. But does this bare knowledge that our intellect has had a past history help us to remove the inadequacies, if any, of our present knowledge as acquired through the intellect as it is now? We cannot for example, help employing the categories of cause-effect, substance, etc., in the interpretation of the order of reality, despite the discovery that they have had a previous history. If our spectacles have come to assume a blue tint, it is impossible for us to see the world as not being blue. To put this more definitely, we must now think of the *past* history of the world in terms of our *present* thought. Hence, for us, things, for example, must have been causally connected in the different stages of the pre-human history of the world, and to know that this particular way of interpreting reality has been evolved in the course of time gives us no help whatsoever to know the world except through the employment of the category of causality.

The conclusion then seems to be inevitable that, to know the process by which our conceptual mechanism has come to be what it is does not solve the problem of our right to

our present intellectual interpretations. In this regard too, Kant, we are inclined to believe, was led by a true instinct when he differentiated the transcendental deduction from the account of the origin of the concepts, and urged that the latter simply tells us how a conception has been acquired by experience and reflection on experience. Granted that the conceptual thinking has been preceded by assimilation, reproduction and association, and that it is the last result of a long process through which the presentational continuum has been gradually differentiated; yet, this should not so blind us as to prevent our seeing that we have to think of the world process in terms of those categories which are implied in conceptual thinking. What the world could have been apart from the categories, it is now absolutely impossible for us to guess.

Ward's insistence on the prior claim of psychology is also at the root of what seems to be another misconception about the Kantian categories. Ward maintains, almost in the spirit of Avenarius, that the categories of substance and cause have not a logomorphic but an anthropomorphic origin; they are not logical forms but subjective analogies.<sup>1</sup> This

Anthropomorphic origin of the categories.

<sup>1</sup> *A Study of Kant*, p. 87. See the development of this view by Mr. G. Galloway, in *Mind*, 1927, p. 321.

anthropomorphism is said to colour our whole view of the world. And then it is admitted that though there is something in the order of reality which corresponds to this anthropomorphic interpretations, the analogy, it is said, cannot be strictly accurate. This account of the categories, in spite of its ingenuity, appears to involve a serious confusion of issues. The vital problem in respect of the place of the categories in our experience is, to put it in the form of the Kantian antithesis, is not one of fact but one of right. As a matter of fact, all our interpretations may be in term of the categories, but to be told simply that they have their origin in the inherent anthropomorphic tendency of the interpreting mind is not to vindicate our right to such analogical interpretations. Because, it may be asked, by what right do we assume that in the real world there are substances, causes, etc., corresponding to our conceptions? May not the conceptions which pervade our interpretations be purely subjective ideas having their origin either in the tendency of imagination as Hume said, or in the anthropomorphic tendency as Ward would have it?<sup>1</sup> Indeed, this

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that Ward's account of causality is one of the alternative views which Hume rejects as unsatisfactory. See *Treatise, Bk. I, Part III, Sec. XIV.*

problem, on a satisfactory solution of which depends the very possibility of knowledge cannot be confounded with the psychological problem which presupposes, but does not vindicate, that possibility. The wide acceptance which is commanded by this theory of the origin of the categories is perhaps due to the firm grip of the commonsense unreflective dualistic standpoint upon even a relentless critic of dualism. In fact, the theory is a subtler form through which the naive dualistic belief expresses itself; but then it must commit a philosopher to some form of the representative theory of knowledge which would be hardly acceptable in its direct form. For, how can an interpretation be known to be anthropomorphic except on the presupposition that we already know the world as the result of a different interpretation? We can never ascertain whether something corresponds to the analogical interpretation while that thing is unknowable except through the interpretation. Because correspondence implies comparison, and no comparison is possible in respect of things one of which is to be known in a way different from that in which the other is known. This, we believe, is one of the permanent services which Berkeley has rendered to the theory of knowledge, and the contention of the contemporary realists



for a theory of epistemological monism shows an appreciation of his service.

The categories, therefore, are not psychological habits, nor are they mere anthropomorphic tendencies. They are, on the contrary, the modes or forms in which thought seeks to satisfy its *nisus* to the systematic unity. In this sense, they may also be called the transcendental conditions of knowledge, much as the law of contradiction is the transcendental condition of judgments. Hence, again, they are not inductive generalisations, for, in fact, generalisations presuppose their validity. They are, again, 'independent of experience,' *not* in the sense that we could ever know them to be self-evident before their application to special cases. It is only when we look back at our own procedure that it is realised that we have presupposed their validity in interpreting or reinterpreting knowledge which was, at the beginning, unsystematized and incoherent.

Stout's  
estimate  
of Kant's  
reply.

For the reasons given above, we find it difficult to agree with such critics of Kant as have urged from the time of Maimon and of Hutchison Stirling that "the whole elaborate apparatus of the Critical Philosophy, so far from showing that he (Hume) is wrong, has shown that he is right."<sup>1</sup> If we mean

<sup>1</sup> Stout, *Mind & Matter*, p. 190.

by the phenomenal world only the world as we know it, and further if the manifold of particulars be understood in the sense of conflicting and inconsistent data which provide the starting-point of reflection, then, Hume was profoundly wrong in thinking that the validity of the 'philosophical relations' was derived from repeated observations of particular cases. As Mr. Stout himself admits, "they cannot themselves be known by inference from experience, as *e.g.*, it is known that fire burns or water drowns. They must be primarily evident." It is true that their self-evidence, as we have frequently urged, could not be recognised if we had never made an inference from experience; and in this sense, there can be "no ground of induction separately ascertained, or postulated, independently of the inductive process itself." But it is equally true that no inductive process could ever be valid if the validity of the postulates of induction had themselves to be justified by induction.

That these postulates cannot be derived inductively from the piecemeal observation of facts has been admitted from the days of Mill. Even if the result of such observations be something higher than the mental habits of expectation to which Hume reduced all laws of nature, it cannot surely rise superior to the

so-called empirical rules. But this admission, as Hume saw with the critical eye of a genuine thinker, would involve us in a circle. And, apart from Hume's remark, Locke's playing fast and loose with the words 'derivation' and 'suggestion' are still fresh in the memory of every student of philosophy. Indeed, the impossibility of an empirical derivation of this supreme logical presupposition of knowledge ought no more to be an open question after the instructive *hysteron proteron* which vitiated the theories of philosophers from Locke to Mill.

The  
Coperni-  
can posi-  
tion.

So far our conclusion is that the systematic unity which belongs to Nature is not known through observation. That which regulates observation and experiment cannot be itself the result of observation. The only answer then, as to the source of this belief, was given by Kant when he said that our Understanding is the source of all combinations. The reason why this position is not more widely recognised is the erroneous implication that, to admit the derivation of the natural structure from the thinking mind is to admit that our minds literally construct the world of things which is evidently a very absurd position. Against this it has been rightly maintained that it is only imagination which is construc-

tive<sup>1</sup> ; the world of objects, on the contrary, is different from imaginary constructions like the worlds of mythology and fairy-tales. But the fact is that Understanding is not imagination which is perfectly free in its creative activity. Understanding has its own inherent laws which are organic to it, and which it can no more violate than water can refuse to flow downwards. In a sense, all that we discover in Nature through intellectual construction is already there, though it is not *given to sense*. At the purely sense-level, the world does not reveal itself—this is all that is meant by the assertion that our Understanding is the source of Nature. To put this in another form, Nature which is there, independent of our mind and our knowledge, reveals herself to us only in so far as we interpret, in the light of intellectual ideals, what is presented to the ordinary consciousness. As this ordinary unreflective view of the world does not satisfy our intellectual aspirations, we have to set this imperfectly ordered world to a perfect order. In thus being ordered, the real world is not distorted, nor does it come into existence for the first time. Those are then perfectly right who

<sup>1</sup> This is one of the main arguments of Mr. H. A. Prichard in his "*Kant's Theory of Knowledge*"

insist that knowledge presupposes the existence of objects or that the objects predate and postdate knowledge. This has never been denied by true idealism. The contention of the idealist is surely based on a surer foundation, which is that even if the world had existed eternally, that would not explain how it would exist for *us*. So far as the independent existence of the external world is concerned, Green, for instance, as we have already seen, is quite unambiguous in condemning the view according to which the world is dependent upon the human mind that comes into existence at a particular period of time.

A. Seth  
on immediate  
experience.

We, then, agree so far with such acute critics of idealism as have insisted that "no sophistry can permanently obscure our perception that the real must be *given*."<sup>1</sup> But to insist further that "thought only describes what it finds", or that judgments of existence "must be originally made in virtue of some immediate assurance, some immediate *datum* of experience," is to court misunderstanding. No one who looks appreciatively at the vast intellectual labour which has preceded the discovery of what we now regard as truisms,—*e.g.*, the sun is the centre of the solar system,

<sup>1</sup> A Seth, *Hegelianism and Personality*, p. 125.

the earth is like a globe,—can seriously degrade the function of thought to describing what is given to immediate experience. If it be admitted that Hegel was essentially right in accepting “self-consciousness as the ultimate category of thought,”<sup>1</sup> and similarly, if it is conceded that “we may truly speak of the categories as realised in nature, just as we speak, in a wider way, of the world as the realisation or manifestation of reason,”<sup>2</sup> then, the insistence on the claim of immediate experience to reveal such a reason-constructed nature loses all its meaning. That is, the admission that the world has the lineaments of a logical structure is fatal to the pretensions of immediate experience.

Hence, the question that at once suggests itself here is : how do we *know* that the world is rational or a systematic whole ? Is it a mere dogmatic belief that is at the basis of science, in spite of the scientist’s professed repugnance to dogma ? When the logical structure of nature is accepted, it appears to be necessary to enquire into the logical basis of this belief, or, to put it in the Kantian form, the possibility of nature. It is not enough to say with the critics of rationalism, such as A. N. Whitehead,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 194.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

that nature is a systematic whole, though it is self-contained for thought. We must raise here, as elsewhere, the question of *evidence*. And it is just here that the insight of the critics seems to be anything but clear. It will not do simply to insist that "the world gives evidence of being constructed on a rational plan."<sup>1</sup>

Thought  
as the  
ultimate  
evidence.

Similarly, when Ward admits that nobody would object to the view that the synthetic principles of the understanding "are a *sine qua non* of *systematic* experience,"<sup>2</sup> we must raise the same question of evidence. Now, we do not deny that there is an appearance of intellectual perversity about the assertion that understanding is itself the source of the laws of nature. But what is apparently absurd may not necessarily be so in reality. The only evidence which is possible from the nature of the case is to be found in the nature of thought itself. No laws of nature could have revealed themselves to the scientist, if he had not tried to remove the anomalies of sense-experience or the incongruities of commonsense; that is, if he had not assumed that nature, in spite of these apparent anomalies and incongruities, is in her ultimate nature, a systematic unity. And this

<sup>1</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> *A Study of Kant*, p. 65.

assumption which is tantamount to the belief that there *are* laws in nature, notwithstanding the *apparently* capricious course of natural events, is ingrained in the nature of thought. "Knowledge," it has been, therefore, rightly observed, "does not merely find and accept; from the very beginning it modifies and constructs. You would not set to know, if given ideas and appearances satisfied you. You would never proceed to infer, if your data were satisfactory as they stand."<sup>1</sup>

It may perhaps help to elucidate the point under discussion, if we consider the reason underlying the difference of appearance and reality in natural things. The sensibly given size of the sun is equal to the real size of a plate; yet, one is considered to be real and the other merely apparent, not because one is presented while the other is not presented in immediate experience. But the reason why the sensible size is still rejected is that the assumption of its being real would be *inconsistent* with the large number of judgments which have been already granted to be judgments about real existence. To put this from the other side, if we had not divided the things into their real and apparent nature, it would be necessary to

<sup>1</sup> Bosanquet, *Implication*, p. 132.



remain satisfied with contradictory predicates. But this is impossible, for, as we have seen above, every assertion implies that nothing which contradicts itself can be thought to be a real thing. "The Law of Identity," it has been very rightly remarked, "is the condition of there being any thought at all, and of there being any thing at all."<sup>1</sup> A thing must at least be a unity, and this necessity is just the logical necessity arising out of the nature of our thought. "A thing," to quote Nettleship once more, "we are told, is the sum of its properties; at any rate it is the unity of a certain manifold. Now the condition of anything being a unity is that its elements should be compatible or consistent with one another; and following this out, we come to the much disputed principle that conceivability, *i.e.*, the capacity of being held together as a unity of elements, is a test of truth.—that the true is the conceivable."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Nettleship, *Philosophical Remains*, p. 178.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

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## CHAPTER IX

### Thought as the Source of Nature

In the last two chapters an attempt has been made to remove some of the difficulties that are still felt about the nature and validity of the first principles of knowledge. If our contentions are so far right, then it follows that the world, whatever it may be found to be in details, is a systematic unity, and this in spite of the evident contradictions existing in knowledge at a particular stage of its development. This knowledge or belief that the world, in its ultimate nature, is a unity, we have further contended, is not derived inductively, for, the processes of observation and experiment presuppose the validity of this belief. The ultimate source of the belief is to be found in thought's nisus to the whole, and the truth of this position is not affected by the admission that thought is the last result of the cosmic evolution. This is all that we mean by the *a priori* knowledge of the world.

Science and philosophy have a common source.

In view of the strong opposition, if not hostility, which any theory of *a priori* knowledge

is sure to arouse in the minds of many eminent thinkers who have rightly insisted on the need of philosophy abandoning the 'high a priori road,' and keeping pace with the developments of modern science, it is, however, necessary to show that science, despite its horror of speculative philosophy, has its source in that very intellectual *nisus* which gives birth to philosophy. If this is not realised by all, the reason is to be found in what may be called a sort of transcendental blindness to the presence of the *a priori* factors in all knowledge and all intelligible experience, that is, blindness in regard to the principles of one's own procedure. When, however, it is clearly seen that there can be no reasoned knowledge which does not presuppose the principles of reason, however unconscious one may be of their presence, the Kantian position that understanding is the source of the laws of nature will be shorn of its apparent paradox.

That science is a thought-construction is denied by many.

We have already tried to justify the Kantian position by drawing out the implications of the contentions of those philosophers who have conceded that the world, in its ultimate character, is a unity, or, what is the same thing in different words, the world is rational. This concession, we have shown, cannot be separated from the further admission that the world has

its source in the *a priori* forms of thought. It is now necessary to consider the contentions of those who, inspired by the phenomenal success of the experimental method of science, have come to deny altogether that the world is a unity at all. The world, according to them, is, even in its ultimate character, an aggregate of contingent elements which defy all attempts at systematization or co-ordination. Nature, at least, when regarded in the light of recent scientific investigations, does not show, it is held, any sign of being a harmonious and coherent unity.

• It is no doubt true that even the Principle of Causality which has so long been regarded as the basis of science has melted away under the progressive analysis of science. The contrast of the modern science without the principle of causality with the classical science based on the universal validity of the causal principle is clearly indicated in a recent article. Professor Max Planck summarizes his explanations of the contrast with the remark that "while in the world of sense the prediction of an event is always affected by something of an uncertainty, in the physicist's world-picture all events follow certain definable laws; they are strictly determined causally. In classical theory, without much bothering about this uncertainty, attention

was concentrated on the elaboration of the causal view of what is going on in the ideal world-picture. That is how it has achieved its great successes. . . . In view of these successes, reasonable hope prevailed that the world-picture of classical physics would on the whole be equal to its task, and the uncertainties remaining after the transfer into and from the world of the senses would lose their importance as experimental methods improved in refinement. But with one stroke this hope has for all time been destroyed by the appearance of the elementary quantum of action."<sup>1</sup>

But analysis of scientific method shows the *a priori* basis of science.

Before the contrast of the modern with the classical science is examined, it may be useful to begin with a few comments on the general method of scientific enquiry. The method of science and its source in the intellectual urge for unification of knowledge have been explained in a general way in the last chapter. But the sharp distinction which is still drawn between the experimental method of science and the speculative method of philosophy, and the exaggerated notion of the contrast of the inductive method with the *a priori* method, require a few more comments on the method of

<sup>1</sup> *The Proceedings of the Physical Society, Vol. 44, Part 5, No. 245, p. 533.*

science. This exaggerated notion of the distinction is entertained, not simply by scientists, but even by philosophers of eminence. Mr. B. Russell, for instance, whose critical genius is as much manifested in mathematics as in philosophy, observes that the assumption of a universe forming a single harmonious system is opposed to the inductive and scientific temper of our age inasmuch as science brooks no *a priorism*.<sup>1</sup>

We have already noted<sup>2</sup> Mr. Russell's reluctant homage to the coherence theory. And it is now necessary to add here that he appears to attach too much importance to the scientist's analysis of the scientific method, when he distinguishes it sharply from the *a priori* method. But here, we think, the importance of Mr. H. W. B. Joseph's remarks cannot be altogether ignored. "Those who did most to advance the sciences", he remarks, "had not the need or inclination to pause and analyse the arguments which they were so successfully building up . . . . It is no more necessary that a great scientific genius should be able to give a correct account of the methods he uses than that a great artist should be able to expound the philosophy of art ; those can often do things

<sup>1</sup> *The Problems of Philosophy*, p. 226.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, p. 156.

best who are quite unable to explain how they do them.”<sup>1</sup>

The  
historical  
contrast  
is false.

It is no doubt true that the experimental method has been historically opposed to the so-called *a priori* method of the philosophers. But Bacon, the protagonist of the purely experimental method, it is generally admitted now, was mistaken in thinking that science can entirely do away with presuppositions. It is true that his predictions about the future triumphs of modern science have since been fulfilled ; but the achievements of science have not been due to the experimental method as he understood it. An exclusive emphasis on the experimental method, strictly speaking, can give no knowledge, as is clearly illustrated by the sensationalistic philosophy of Bacon's followers. In fact, the scientist does not simply register facts passively ; he has to select and idealise them, and in this process of selection, he is guided by the ideal of a whole. The ideal of a Nature as a systematic unity which regulates all the investigations of the scientist and which ultimately decides between a good and a bad experiment is just that presupposition which Bacon, in his just zeal against the false *a priorism* of the previous philosophers, failed to notice. “ Can we not be content ”, asks Mr.

<sup>1</sup>*Introduction to Logic, p. 394.*

Poincaré,<sup>1</sup> "with just the bare experiment?" And then he answers himself: "No, that is impossible; it would be to mistake utterly the true nature of science. The scientist must set in order. Science is built up with facts as a house is with stones. But a collection of facts is no more a science than a heap of stones is a house." And then almost in an anti-Baconian strain, he remarks that "the bare facts then would not be enough for us, and that is why we must have science ordered, or rather organised. It is often said experiments must be made without a preconceived idea. That is impossible."

• The fact is that the rational implicates of experience cannot be denied by science inasmuch as it aims at a coherent knowledge of the world. And the assumption that the world is coherent is in no way opposed to the inductive spirit of modern science. It is true, the scientist cannot accept any proposition without *proof*; but neither can he assume that the experimental proof is the only reliable proof, with Hume's warning staring him in the face. To deify the experimental method is to despair of knowledge. Should we not then agree with Kant that it is not possible to furnish an inductive proof of the belief that the universe forms a single harmonious system, yet it is transcendently proved in

<sup>1</sup> *The Foundation of Science*, p. 127.



so far as it is the most fundamental logical implicate of experience? Does it not follow further that in this respect Kant's opinion still holds good that though all knowledge begins with experience, yet it is not on that account derived from experience?

Mathematics at least, anticipates the frames of Nature.

Kant's celebrated formula has, however, been accepted by those contemporary thinkers who admit that thought has a general character which is not empirically derived. Mathematical conclusions, it is said, flow from the general character of thinking and are independent of sense-perception. But, it is then added, though all abstract and logical thinking which deals with universals is *a priori*, yet it by no means follows from this admission that thought has a constitutive function in connection with the specific relatedness of things in the spatio-temporal world. The implication of this position evidently is that the world of thought and the world of things are entirely different from one another, so that the truth of a geometrical inference, for example, is not affected by the possibility that there are no such figures in nature, nor by the conclusion that the space of nature is non-Euclidean. Now, such remarks inevitably remind one of Locke's treatment of mathematics which is too well-known to need elaboration. It is, however, important to re-

member that Locke, in thus sundering the science of "ectypes" from that of "archetypes" never realized the complicated nature of the really important question of the objective validity of mathematical conclusions. Whether space be Euclidean or not, mathematics has to proceed *a priori*, and yet its conclusions are not merely imaginary constructions but are objectively valid. The non-Euclidean space is as much revealed through conceptual construction as any other type of reality. Have we not here a clear instance, as Kant saw long ago, of thought prescribing laws to Nature?

. That science does not simply accumulate facts that are presented to immediate experience, on the contrary, the real clue to its success is to be found in its power to frame theories for which the sense-presented facts are only the indispensable starting-point, has been clearly seen, not only by such philosophers as Comte, Lotze and the idealists in general; but the same truth is suggested by many remarks of men of science who are still engaged in the work of reconstruction of the world of matter. "Scientific discovery," in the words of one of the most eminent scientists of our age, "is like the fitting together of the pieces of a great jig-saw puzzle; a revolution of science does not mean that the pieces already arranged and interlocked have

The nature of scientific discoveries, and of scientific theories.

to be dispersed ; it means that in fitting on fresh pieces we have had to revise our impression of what the puzzle-picture is going to be like. The revolutions of thought as to the final picture do not cause the scientist to lose faith in his handiwork, for he is aware that the completed portion is growing steadily. Amid all our faulty attempts at expression the kernel of scientific truth steadily grows ; and of this truth it may be said—The more it changes, the more it remains the same thing.”<sup>1</sup>

It is clearly suggested by such remarks that science cannot abandon the belief that there is such a thing as a “final picture” towards which “the completed portion is growing steadily,” and that the phrase “fuller realisation of the world” is not without meaning even for scientists. And this belief, it must be then admitted, is not empirically derived from scientific observation or experiment. We may be allowed here to cite a few observations we made more than a decade ago on the need of what Sir A. S. Eddington has aptly called the fitting together of the pieces. “Man, when called on to penetrate into the nature of Reality, is puzzled at

<sup>1</sup> Sir A. S. Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World*, p. 352. His remarks have been considerably abridged.

the impregnable frontiers which bear the marks of innumerable knocks left by a struggling humanity on its onward march, and seem to mock at the fresh assaults of a new intruder. Nothing daunted by this, and inspired by an indomitable confidence in his own power and resources, man joins the struggle afresh and cheers himself up by interpreting the past failures as the pillars of a future success. Thus the growth of knowledge assumes a rhythmic appearance jagged by the marks of action and reaction.

“In this process of action and reaction through which knowledge struggles for self-expression, a new discovery is like a turn of the kaleidoscope which introduces a perfectly strange scene by forcing the old materials into a new organisation and thus subverting the relations that gave the previous scene its individuality. So a really new theory is always a signal for reorganising the long-established beliefs in all spheres of life, intellectual, moral and religious. This need for reorganisation,—to confine ourselves to the discoveries of the Physical Sciences—was once felt about the beginning of what is called the modern period in the intellectual development of Europe, when Tycho Brahe placed the sun in the centre of the planetary system, Copernicus placed the earth

among the planets, and new truths about the forms of the planetary orbits and the motion of the earth were revealed by Kepler and Galileo. The new cosmology was completed by Newton by means of his theory of universal attraction. In face of this world-picture man's religious and ethical consciousness had to be reconciled with his intellectual ideal. Science and Philosophy, Ethics and Religion entered into a fraternity in the work of reconstruction. The Newtonian conception of the world received a further enrichment, by a series of important truths which were discovered towards the end of the eighteenth century by the investigations of Lavoisier, Priestley, Ingenhous and others, and which were completed about the middle of the nineteenth century by the discovery of the famous law of Robert Mayer. These discoveries once more necessitated a reconciliation between the demands of our practical consciousness and the scientific conception of the world, and compelled thinkers to see if the foundations upon which the speculative philosophy of religion was based were not ultimately identical with those of the world-picture which was arrived at by the scientific method.

Our century is witnessing another radical change in our outlook, and feeling the need of another new reorganisation. The source of this

new call may be primarily traced to the investigations of Einstein and Minkowski. The deductions that follow from their researches mean almost a death-signal to the accepted scientific conception of the world, and have given such a violent shock to its foundations that the stupendous Newtonian super-structure has been already made too shaky not to tumble down in the near future.”<sup>1</sup>

Since these lines were written, our prediction has come to be true, for, the Newtonian structure has finally tumbled down owing to the tremendous shock it received from scientists such as Heisenberg, Dirac and Schrödinger. We are not concerned here with the details of the experiments which have led to the downfall of the Newtonian structure. What is of fundamental importance for us is to analyse the ultimate forces at work in these rises and falls of scientific structures. These ultimate forces, as we have frequently suggested, are the organising, synthesising or ordering forces which are imbedded in thought. A new theory, as we have said above, is a signal for reorganisation, and a new discovery is analogous to a new turn

The strength of a theory due to its unifying power.

<sup>1</sup> *The Present Relation between Philosophy and Science*, an article in *The Educational Review*, for Dec. 1921.

of the kaleidoscope. The success of a theory depends on its capacity for ordering the materials, and so a new theory is born of the inefficiency of the old to harmonise new materials with what have been already unified by the latter.

This may be illustrated by reference to any theory of science. Why did the wave-theory of light supplant the corpuscular theory? The reason why it did so was the same which led to substitution of the theory of electricity as nuclei of strain in the aether in place of the old fluid-theory, or, which led to the replacement of the world of three dimensions by the four-fold complex of modern science. That is, the reason is that the new theories can unify better than the old. Einstein's theory of relativity is victorious, because it can, *e.g.*, unify inertia and gravitation, or FitzGerald contraction and the variation of mass with velocity, better than the Newtonian laws of motion. Similarly, the new quantum theory of Heisenberg has replaced the old quantum theory because it can unify those phenomena that were explained by the older quantum laws, with other phenomena that they could not explain.

The philosophical background of

With these preliminary remarks on the method of science, we may now profitably come to a closer grip with modern physics with its

tendency to undermine the principle of causation. Now, the doctrine of contingency, as is well known, is at least as old as the time of Secrétan and Ravaisson who infused into modern French philosophy the spirit of Kant's doctrine of the primacy of practical reason, and sought to criticise the claims of intellect from the standpoint of will and feeling. And so far as science is concerned, the doctrine may be traced back to the severe and damaging criticism which the mechanical theory received at the hands of a number of eminent scientists headed by Earnst Mach. Thus, philosophers and scientists alike, in their zeal against the mechanical theory, started that important campaign against the Principle of Causality which, during the interval of about half a century, has intensified into an organised hostility, built the quantum theory of modern physics and led to the discovery of the Principle of Indeterminacy.

the principle of Indeterminacy,

If the Principle of Indeterminacy was to be finally built on the ashes of the Principles of Causality, it appears to be a cruel irony of fate that Kant should have ever been awakened from his 'dogmatic slumber' by Hume who threatened to destroy science by his fatal attack on the causal principle. For, despite all the labour spent by Kant on his transcendental deduction of the categories, the subsequent



developments of science tend to show the substantial correctness of Hume's contention that there are no objective connections in Nature; the events may be conjoined but not connected according to necessary and universal laws. An electron, for instance, may have a fairly accurately ascertained position, but in proportion to this accuracy in its position, there will be a compensating inaccuracy in its momentum. What is true of the relation between position and momentum is also true of all other relations between physical quantities, such as time and energy; and the result is that there are no fixed inviolable laws of nature except perhaps the statistical laws which conceal a residuum of uncertainty while at the same time satisfying man's desire to seek rules behind the irregular courses of events. That is, the laws of nature, in ultimate analysis, are but uniformities of averages that conceal the extremely lawless and uncertain behaviours of the atoms, electrons or quanta.

These contentions of modern science are obviously parallel to those of Mach and Petzoldt, or, again, of Avenarius, Bergson and Ward. It is not our present concern to estimate the general value of these scientific and philosophical criticisms of the mechanical theory as a universal principle of explanation. It may be

true that the category of cause is after all a defective category and that its defect cannot be removed till it is re-interpreted in the light of a higher category. But the doctrine of contingency does not attack the category of cause from this standpoint at all. It seeks, on the contrary, to question the wisdom of applying the category of cause to any real events at all; and thus, in stead of saying that it is a defective category, the doctrine of contingency would question whether it is a category at all. So the problem we must raise here is:—Can we attach any intelligible sense to the term ‘world’ or ‘nature’ when the causal principle is supposed to be a mere fiction of imagination having nothing corresponding to it in the world?

We may restrict the problem and consider how far the causal principle can be dispensed with in giving an intelligible description of the material world. According to our previous explanations of the principles of knowledge, the categories of unity and causality are indispensable for any knowledge which claims to be true. The denial of their validity does not simply lead to a different construction of Nature; it rather makes every construction unintelligible, for, as we shall try to show below, it is ultimately a contradiction in terms. But can there be any description of natural events or

The Principle has-implicit in it a contradiction.

entities which does not presuppose the validity of the law of contradiction? The quantum theory, for instance, cannot be true if the classical theory claims to be equally true. Or, to take a more specific example, Niels Bohr's theory of atom according to which the atom is a kind of solar system with the electrons revolving round the central proton has broken down, because it was found *inconsistent* with the classification of the spectral lines. That is, Bohr's model of the atom was successful so long as it could unify the results of experiments on the various spectral lines; but it had to be abandoned when it was found that, beyond certain points, there was no correspondence between the series of lines in the spectra and the orbit jumps of the electrons. Again, the old atomic theory had been abandoned because it was found *inconsistent* with the famous experiments on electricity, particularly those of Rutherford which finally led to the replacement of the old theory by the solar-system theory of Bohr. Thus, the different theories which have made their appearance from the end of the last century down to the present day, including the most recent theories of Dirac and Schrödinger, have arisen out of the same need to unify or harmonise the results of varied experiments.

If then it be admitted that the rises and falls of the theories, as we have suggested above, are due to their success or failure respectively in unifying experimental results, we can easily see the bearing of this admission on the confidence with which our physicists are seeking to replace the principle of causality by what is called the principle of indeterminacy of the new quantum theory. Now the first point to be noted here is the dissatisfaction and annoyance which even the scientists have evinced at the arrogant claims of the quantum theory. When Einstein asks in his message on the Newton Centenary for the power to restore unison between physical reality and strict causality, it is not, we believe, a mere sentimental regard for Newton's memory which dictates the prayer. Similarly, when such an eminent scientist as Eddington, in spite of his emphatic assertion that physics is no longer pledged to a scheme of deterministic law, yet concedes that "the quantum laws for individuals are not incompatible with causality"<sup>1</sup> or that scientists must "look forward to an ultimate reconstruction of our conceptions of the physical world which will embrace both the classical laws and the quantum laws in

The views of scientists on the present state of science.

<sup>1</sup> *The Nature of the Physical World*, p. 303.

harmonious association,"<sup>1</sup> such concessions are not to be ascribed to the speculative tendencies of a scientist who ought to have known his business. Such remarks, we believe, are prompted by what we have called thought's *nisus* toward the whole. The ideal of a harmonious whole which regulates and inspires co-ordination of the stray results of experiments militates against the apparently fascinating stories of the quantum theory which, in the prophetic words of Eddington, is perhaps doomed to fall in the next thirty years having served its turn like the previous theories of Euclid, Ptolemy and Newton.

We are told, however, that notwithstanding the distance between the world-picture of classical physics and that of quantum physics, the latter is governed by the same rigorous determinism which ruled the former. But Prof. Max Planck, in the article already referred to where he gives a clear idea of the strong and the weak points of the determinist and the indeterminist among the scientists, thinks that the law of causality, in ultimate analysis, "is neither right nor wrong, it can be neither generally proved nor generally disproved." It is only a "heuristic

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.

principle," a most valuable signpost "to guide us in the motley confusion of events and to show us the direction in which scientific research must advance in order to attain fruitful results."

It is interesting to note the Kantian spirit in which Prof. Planck distinguishes between what Kant would call the ideas of reason that are only heuristic, not ostensive, and the categories of understanding; and Prof. Planck's assumption of "an ideal mind" whose predictions would be absolutely accurate is, again, parallel to Kant's conception of the asymptotical relation in which the empirical use of the reason stands to the principles of homogeneity, of specification, and of continuity. This means that though the material world is in reality a unified system, yet it is only an ideal *for us*, and it is bound to remain a mere ideal because "man with his senses and his measuring-instruments is a part of nature." It follows then that the world, even from the standpoint of quantum physics, is in reality a system, though this cannot be realised in human knowledge. If this be the outcome of the recent developments in science, then it is time that the claim of the law of indeterminacy to the rank of a law of nature should be definitely rejected, for, nature is in reality

uniform; it is only our knowledge that is defective.<sup>1</sup>

The  
funda-  
mental  
difficulty.

The problem which we would like to raise in connection with the principle of indeterminacy is not, however, exactly of this nature. Our problem relates, not to the ideal of knowledge, but to human knowledge as it is at a given stage of development, and we would like to ask whether the categories of unity and causality are not implicit in the latter. Is it possible to attach an intelligible meaning to a reality which claims to be entirely indeterminable by the concepts of causality and unity? Is it not necessary for every object of thought, no matter what it is in details, to be something that can be identified as *this* as distinct from *that*? This identification would certainly be impossible

<sup>1</sup> This distinction between human knowledge and the systematic reality has given rise to a sort of mystic tendency in many of our scientists, such as Eddington, and Prof. Planck has been evidently influenced by it. The devotion to science, for him, is a matter of faith. But this tendency, we believe, is entirely gratuitous for science, because it is not true that the conception of a systematic world is a mere matter of faith which eludes logical thinking. It is rather the only ideal of thought; and inasmuch as it is thought's own ideal, it is misleading to suppose that "this faith can be forced upon nobody." Nobody who has the power of clear thinking can repudiate the law of thought, for even such a repudiation presupposes the validity of the law, and so the ideal need not be forced upon anybody at all.

if, for instance, the electrons, the waves, or the quanta had no determinate behaviours following from their respective natures. It is only through these determinate behaviours, again, that one can be distinguished from the rest. Thus identification and differentiation lie at the very basis of intelligible assertions; and inasmuch as the electrons, the wave functions, the action-units of the four-dimensional world, X-rays and gamma rays are all definable objects of thought, they must be capable of being identified and differentiated. And this means that their respective behaviours follow from their respective natures; in other words, unity and causality enter into their innermost being, and each is a unity-in-difference.

This simple truth is made obscure when the belief is entertained that the new quantum theory has discovered the real nature of the material world by abandoning the mechanical theory, or that the indefinable oscillating entity of the wave-theory of matter gives a truer version of matter than even the solar-system theory of Bohr. Granted that the new developments of physics cannot be understood in terms of mechanism, and so one must go to the trained mathematician, rather than to the mechanical engineer, for building up the material world. But, it must be conceded at

Indeter-  
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the same time that even the structure of a fairy-land cannot be built up out of indefinable materials. And if we are to accept the mathematician as an expert builder, he should come to a clearer consciousness of his own materials ; for, to confess that the materials are indefinable is to give the clearest proof that he is not only not building the real world of matter, but he is not building at all. It is then no wonder that Professors Joseph<sup>1</sup> and G. Dawes Hicks<sup>2</sup> should have sought in vain to determine the nature of the relata the coefficients of which have enabled the mathematician to construct the physical world.

Nothing is further from our thought than the suggestion that mathematics cannot or has not made important contributions to the construction of the world of matter. Our contention is that no construction is possible with entities that are absolutely indeterminable. The description of the position and velocity of an electron beyond a limited number of places of decimals is impossible, and from this it is concluded that there is no determinate relation between these two aspects of the electron in Nature. But, this indeterminacy in the nature of the electron is conceivable only in so far as it has other properties that are determinate and by which

<sup>1</sup> *Hibbert Journal*, April, 1929.

<sup>2</sup> *Aristotelian Society Proceedings*, 1928-29.

it can be identified; otherwise it would be impossible to talk of the velocity *of* electrons as distinct from that of something else. What is true of the electron is also true of all other concepts, such as position, velocity, mass, action, etc. These are all significant notions, and each of them is what it is because it is distinguished from the rest by properties which the latter do not possess. The conclusion that follows from such considerations is that the indeterminacy of an entity in certain respects presupposes its determinateness in other respects; in other words, we can conceive arbitrariness in the behaviours of an entity, only in so far as it behaves in perfectly definite ways under other conditions. Absolute lawlessness is inconceivable, either in the world of matter or in that of spirit.

If then so much be granted, one must give up the idea of constructing physical structures on a non-causal basis. No knowledge is possible without the categories of cause and substance, because they enter into the very essence of every conceivable entity, no matter whether we are thinking of energy, mass, wave-function or quantum constant. Physics, therefore, cannot dispense with the categories of causality and substance, despite all the intricate and mysterious formulæ of the mathematician; and so

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meaning.

there is no need for a new epistemology to meet the requirements of modern science. Substance is nothing mysterious lying beyond the properties or the responses, it is not the inscrutable residuum over and above the qualities that are supposed to be alone knowable. On the contrary, it is that which expresses itself through the knowable properties and responses. Hence to know the responses is so far to know the substance. If, for instance, it be granted that the "knowledge of the response of various metrical indicators" to the presence of the body is "fairly comprehensive," and such a knowledge "would determine completely its relation to its environment," then this does not leave its "un-get-atable nature" completely undetermined, as Eddington seems to think.<sup>1</sup> The player is as much known by the tune he plays as by the force with which he stamps the ground.

The  
statistical  
laws.

After what has so far been said about the categories of cause and substance, it is not necessary to expatiate on the distinction between the statistical and the causal laws. If the lawlessness of the individuals constituting a group had been absolute there could be no statistical laws of the group, and consequently no possibility of prediction. A scientific prediction

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 257.

on the basis of statistical laws becomes necessary, not when causal laws are known, but only when knowledge falls short of reality. It would be as groundless to maintain that there is no cause or definite condition for the outbreak of an epidemic because all that we know so far is the statistical rule of the disease, as to assume that the occurrence of the lunar eclipse in 1999 will not be determined by conditions because our prediction is not based on complete data.

The last point which we must touch upon before passing on to other topics is the current distinction between the world of sense and the world-pictures of science. This separation between the two worlds, which is so characteristic of the neo-realistic attitude of mind, has influenced many eminent thinkers of our age. The pictures, according to them, hide the reality which is open to immediate experience. This in fact is the key-note of the theories of Whitehead, Russell, Alexander and the neo-realists, as it has been also the corner-stone of the doctrines of Wundt, Mach, Avenarius and Bergson. But has any successful account of the physical world been possible on the basis of mere sense-given materials? We have noted several times the difficulties implicit in pure sensationalism or radical empiricism. An entirely passive

The world  
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conceptual  
pictures.

contemplation of sense-data without an effort of interpretation would make them altogether indescribable, a manifold which could not be even described as a manifold. For, to *name* a sense-datum is at once to take it out of its purely sensuous setting and invest it with universality for which sense *qua* sense cannot afford a ground. It can be, at least, identified in different contexts, and this is the indispensable element of interpretation which enters into its nature. What is called the world-picture is but an extension of the same process of interpretation that begins with identification. Even the things of ordinary commonsense knowledge would not be what they are if the sense-given data had not been interpreted and taken into conceptual frames. To feel a feeling and to know it as a feeling, as we have noted above, are two very different functions of the mind.

The distinction then between the world of sense-data and world-pictures, we submit, is based upon an unreal abstraction. If we could imagine a creature with what has been called *anoetic* consciousness, the world would not exist for it, and every moment of its life would be a miracle, for, an inchoate interpretation is a pragmatic necessity. The events and sense-data which are supposed to be alone real are surely less than the pragmatic world and are

therefore unfit even for life. It is only in so far as they are amplified and made concrete through the so-called pictures that they serve the purposes of life and knowledge. To interpret the sense-data, therefore, is not to bifurcate Nature, but, on the contrary, it is to help Nature to reveal herself. And consequently, to pass from the world of immediate experience to the world-pictures is not to leave the real Nature for a shadow performance or an unreal replica; but it is the only way to remove the sense-presented inadequacies which hide the real nature of the material world. The problem of passing from the world of sense-experience to the constructed pictures, and *vice versa*, appears therefore to be an entirely imaginary problem.

The root-difficulty here, we are persuaded to believe, arises from a serious misconception of the function of thought; and this misconception in its turn is due to what we have called above transcendental blindness. To think, as we have frequently urged, is to unify or to systematise, and this begins with identification and differentiation of objects, leading up to interpretation in terms of unity, causality, and other categories. When science or philosophy constructs world-pictures, it does not then give us abstract conceptual fictions in place of concrete reality revealed through immediate

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experience ; but it has only continued the same process of interpretation and systematisation that is imperfectly present in commonsense knowledge. Even our ordinary knowledge is not based upon immediate experience, for when we perceive, for instance, a tree, we evidently mean by it a real object that has an identity of its own enduring through the different presentations of different percipients, and of different moments of time. On the other hand, the presentations are in constant flux and are mutually conflicting. It is to remove these conflicts and contradictions in immediate experience that a distinction is introduced between real appearance and mere appearance.

When, therefore, it is urged that knowledge has for its goal, not the general, but the individual, it is entirely forgotten that the individual has no meaning apart from the universal. Similarly, when it is supposed that "our intellect is incapable of anything but Platonising;"<sup>1</sup> what is overlooked is that to refuse to Platonise is equivalent to abandonment of the possibility of intelligible assertions about any real thing, such as the tree or the table. For, immediate experience or immediate intuition, when it is strictly taken apart from the mediating activity of thought which necessarily works with con-

<sup>1</sup> Bergson, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 73.

cepts, is speechless and incommunicable ; and its content cannot be even described as an unrelated atomic existence, for, even an atom is a communicable concept. Life, consciousness, movement, evolution,—these are significant concepts and would lose all meanings for us if they had been simply grasped in moments of immediate intuition.

Our contentions here are so similar to the weighty critical remarks which Prof. Aliotta has made on intuitionism in general, and his statement of the defect of intuitionism is so clear that they may bear repetition. There can be, he observes, no philosophy without concepts: "even your metaphysic is not the immediate life and intuitive communication of ever new impressions, but conceals beneath its metaphors a system of concepts every whit as abstract as those of intellectualism ; the organ of your philosophy is not intuition, which, however far-reaching it may be, cannot give more than the passing moment, but *the concept of intuition*, the *thought* that the immediately experienced activity is not peculiar to your mind alone, but is common to all consciousnesses ; the *thought* that your inmost actions, like the actions of all mankind, tend towards a universal end."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Idealistic Reaction against Science*, p. 148.



The fact is that concepts, as Kant saw clearly, are rules that unify knowledge and there can be no knowledge without concept 'however indefinite or obscure it may be.' And so to condemn thought or concept as abstract is to make what remains over an incommunicable pulse of experience. And the nemesis of these attempts at describing the world from a non-intellectual standpoint is the old fallacy of *hysteron proteron* which rendered Hume's psychology a splendid failure.

Now that we are coming to the close of one important part of our essay, the part, namely, which is exclusively concerned with the problem of knowledge, it may be useful at this place to emphasise once more the importance of the great movement of thought from Hume to Kant, who exhaust between themselves the alternatives of the disjunctive movement of human thought. If scepticism be but a temporary tabernacle of human reason and not its final resting-place, one must accept the Kantian analysis of knowledge as the only other alternative route to the temple of truth. And philosophy would be nothing better than a wild-goose chase when it runs after an anti-Kantian or anti-intellectual phantom which may lead one to morasses and quagmires, but not to the solid ground of reality.

This of course does not mean that the only task of philosophy is to analyse knowledge and draw out its implications. Philosophy, we believe, would be an entirely uninviting pursuit if it had made epistemology anything more than a foundation for metaphysical constructions. Even Kant, as is well known, sought to "destroy knowledge to make room for faith." But, what we do mean is that no metaphysical structures can have abiding worth when they are indifferent to the nature of the foundation. Metaphysics may be built on the demands of moral or religious consciousness, or, again, it may be constructed on the suggestions of æsthetic feelings; but, as every construction is ultimately analysable into a number of judgments which claim to be true, no metaphysics worth the name can defy the findings of a sound theory of knowledge. A metaphysics that is founded on mere unreflective suggestions of life is built on a rope of sands.

We need not enter here upon the historical controversy on the metaphysical value of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. It is well known how K. L. Reinhold characterised it as a work which had dissatisfied alike the dogmatists, the supernaturalists, the naturalists, the materialists and the spiritualists; it is equally well known how the question has divided Volkelt and Vaihinger

from Paulsen and E. Adickes. But whatever may have been Kant's ulterior intentions, he was surely wrong if he supposed that morality or religion could be built on the duality of reason. No intelligible assertion can ignore the laws of thought, and so every judgment about will and emotion, instinct and feeling, must conform to the logical intellect. An emotion, for instance, is a fact, but, in the words of Prof. J. S. Moore, to know that I have an emotion and to know what that involves is quite a different matter from merely experiencing emotion."<sup>1</sup> And so judgment about experience "is as such always cognitive." And in this respect, it is significant that even those who have done most for pressing the claims of the non-intellectual aspects of life have not been slow to see the danger of subordinating intellect to will or feeling. *E.g.*, Bradley insists, on the one hand, that the man who demands a reality more solid than that of the religious consciousness knows not what he seeks ; "<sup>2</sup> But he finds, on the other hand, that "if there is to be philosophy its proper business is to satisfy the intellect, and the other sides of our nature have, if so, no right to speak directly."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Foundations of Psychology*, p. 44.

<sup>2</sup> *Appearance and Reality*, p. 449.

<sup>3</sup> *Truth and Reality*, p. 221. Cp. also A. S. Pringle-Pattison, *The Idea of God*, p. 239.

## CHAPTER X

### The Self and its Place in Knowledge

The analysis of the first principles of knowledge attempted in the foregoing pages cannot evidently be said to be entirely new. Indeed, as we have admitted in the introductory chapter, any pretension to absolute novelty or originality on the part of a modern student of philosophy would betray only an inadequate acquaintance with the history of the subject in which he claims to bring about a revolution. All that we believe to have achieved, however, is that by restating some of the old truths in the language of contemporary thought, we have succeeded in clearing off the obstacles which have stood in the way of a sound theory of knowledge, and consequently of a sound theory of self. No one, we venture to think, will altogether ignore the value of such periodical attempts at philosophical sifting of the notions and concepts of thought, in view of the delicate and notoriously difficult nature of logical thinking. If our endeavour has been so far successful, we may now turn profitably to the consideration of the

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supreme problem of philosophy,—namely, the problem of self—in so far as a theory of knowledge can throw light on it.

Obviously, nothing is further from our purpose at this place than an exhaustive study of the different doctrines of self. We shall confine ourselves, within the limited space at our disposal, to indicating in broad outlines the directions in which a true theory of self has to be developed in so far as it is consistent with a true theory of knowledge. The foregoing discussions on the nature of knowledge have already anticipated to some extent what should have otherwise to be considered here. It may be, however, useful to carry these discussions a little further with a more explicit reference to their bearing on the problem of self. As in the case of knowledge, so here, again, it may be helpful to begin, almost in the spirit of Descartes, with what, we think, should be the common-ground for the competing theories.

The self  
and the  
world.

It is an obvious truth that everything known implies a knower. Indeed, it is so transparently obvious that an attempt to prove it would seem like wasting logical ingenuity over a truism or a tautology which is beyond the region of proof or disproof. And in fact, the truth of this position has never been denied either by the layman who is not generally troubled by the ultimate

problems of metaphysics, or by the philosopher who cannot help raising the ultimate problems of knowledge and existence. Now, the first point that should be made clear, in view of the age-long disputes between idealism and realism, is that this fundamental truth is not affected in the least by the realism-idealism controversy. Even if it be granted that the stupendous universe consisting of the multitudinous things and entities, events and changes, exists independently of the knowing mind, this concession does not falsify the truth that the universe, *as known*, implies a knower or a self, and thus stands in an inseparable organic relation to the mind that knows it.

Thus, for instance, it may be conceded that the law of gravitation was independent of Newton's knowledge of that law, and the fateful fall of the apple which was to influence the destiny of scientific researches for a long time to come was but the expression of a universal law which had regulated the behaviours of countless other apples long before the historical event which is ordinarily called Newton's perception of the fall of the apple. And what is true of the law of gravitation is equally true of any other fact or law; the scientist does not create, but only discovers, what would have otherwise remained unknown to humanity. In

this sense, it may be admitted, the laws and the facts predate and postdate the knowledge-event. It is true that the discovery of the facts is by no means simple; on the contrary, it involves long arduous and complex processes which it is the business of Logic and Epistemology to analyse and clear up as best as they can. This, however, need not affect the truth that the laws and the facts did not come into existence when this man or that man came to know them at a particular time of the world's history.

Notwithstanding this realistic concession, however, it remains true that the world's history, including the particular knowledge-events, has a meaning only in relation to a self that knows it; *as known*, all these laws and events are inseparably related to the knower. This, as we have insisted above, is the fundamental truth verging on a tautology. Yet,—such is the difficulty of the problem of self—this simple truth is forgotten in the heat of philosophical controversy more frequently than many complex principles, and this is perhaps due to an obstinately objective attitude of mind which is drawn out to the world of object more easily than drawn within into itself. In objective cognition, it is rightly complained by Prof. Bernardino Varisco, “we pay attention only to things, to objects: we forget ourselves.” When, on the other hand,

we do not thus forget ourselves, then we "may reflect that the experience systematised by us is *our* experience, that the systematising activity of experience is an activity of our own. Besides the known object, we then also take into consideration the knowing subject—the fact of our knowing."<sup>1</sup> All the manifold ways in which (this simple truth has been obscured by the objective attitude of mind go to constitute the history of the problem of self.) It is, therefore, necessary to emphasise the simple truth that, as put by Prof. Varisco, "objective cognition is *my* cognition, cognition of an experience belonging to my self, and obtained by an activity of my own: it would not exist, if I did not exist."<sup>2</sup>

(The same truth is expressed in another language when it is often said that existence-for-self is the highest category of knowledge, Kant's transcendental analysis of knowledge, apart from the metaphysical and psychological controversy which it has induced, has for its real basis the fundamental truth which we have been considering at this place; and his formulation of the truth is as simple as it is convincing. In view of the simplicity and directness as well as the importance of the issues involved, his

The self  
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centre of  
the uni-  
verse.

<sup>1</sup> *Know Thyself*, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.



formulation of the position, we think, may bear a reference here. "The 'I think' must be *capable* of accompanying all my ideas : otherwise there would be presented to my mind an idea of something which could not be thought, and this means that the idea would be impossible, or, at least, that it would be nothing at all *for me*." This, as Caird remarks, can cause little difficulty ; for, Kant is here simply insisting on "the possibility of all 'ideas' being determined in relation to the conscious self, as the one condition which we can lay down for them *a priori*. Nothing can get into our mind, nothing can exist for us, if it is not capable of being referred to the one self, or determined as an element in its consciousness of itself."<sup>1</sup> (The self then is the most ultimate condition of experience ; or, what is the same thing in different words, it is the ultimate transcendental condition of objectivity.) The object, it may be further remarked, may be anything that exists irrespective of the nature or special quality by which it is distinguished from the rest. Thus, for instance, the objects of my investigations may be matter, force, energy, will, emotion, instinct ; or, again, they may be the physiological response of the organism, the psychological

<sup>1</sup> *The Critical Philosophy, I, p. 353.*

complexes, the events and event-particles, and what not. In all these cases, however, the object must be related to the self that knows, discusses or investigates it. Considered in this light, the self may be compared to the centre of an indefinite number of concentric circles, the circumferences and radii of these circles being occupied by objects of different orders. And in fact this analogy has been widely adopted by philosophers of different schools of thought, it being the only apt analogy for expressing the universal relation of objects in general to the self that knows them.

. Another truth requires elucidation at this place. (The relation in which the objects stand to the self is the most generic relation which is presupposed by all specific relations obtaining between one object and another.) In other words, the subject-object relation has to be carefully distinguished from every inter-objective relation, as any confusion between the two is sure to obscure the truth which the former is meant to convey. If existence-for-self is admitted to be the highest category under which all objects of thought must stand, it is surely unmeaning to identify the subject-object relation with any of the inter-objective relations which presuppose it. An inter-objective relation may be, for example, spatial, temporal or causal ;

The  
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jective  
relation.

but the relata as well as the relations in these cases have no meaning except in so far as they exist for a self, and consequently the peculiar way in which the relata stand in relation to the self is irreducible to any of the relations obtaining among themselves.

The fatal dualism in the concept of self as a thing.

From these considerations, it ought to be obvious that (the self cannot be regarded after the analogy of a thing or a substance.) A thing we have frequently remarked, is what it is in virtue of the manifold relations in which it stands to things other than itself. And if it be further conceded that it has no meaning except in so far as it stands for a self, then, evidently, the self can be called a thing only by denying at the same time that it is the ultimate condition of the thing. Yet, however, following the Cartesian opposition of mind and matter, many appear to have misconstrued knowledge as a relation between two entities one of which is called the knower on account of a particular type of property belonging to it. This property is sometimes named thought or consciousness and sometimes response. But whatever may be the name of the property, the dualism is not questioned. Yet, it was one of the results of the Kantian analysis of knowledge that the subject-object relation, far from being identical with the relation of mind to matter, is the

ultimate presupposition of all other relations that are discovered with the progressive advance of knowledge. The material thing, for ordinary thought, causes on each mind certain sensations or changes; and then the philosophers seek to complete the analysis either by reducing the material thing to a complex of sensations, or by reducing the mind to a thing distinguished from other things only by a peculiar type of response to the environment. And then arise all the difficulties and perplexities involved in the dualism of phenomenon and epiphenomenon with its sceptical attitude to the mental and the material substances. It is the initial mistake of identifying mind with the subject which, we think, is at the root of these epistemological difficulties. Matter and mind, it is time to recognise clearly, are *not* identical with subject and object, for, the relation between matter and mind is just one of the many relations which the subject discovers in its attempt to know the world. "There could hardly be a greater mistake than this identification;" it has been emphatically urged, for the "duality in unity of subject and object at once lapses, and the old gulf between thinking substance and extended substance, between external phenomena and internal phenomena reappears."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> James Ward, *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, I, p. 114.

Know-  
ledge as a  
unique  
relation.

Once we get rid of this confusion, between mind as an object among other objects and the subject, it becomes clear that all distinctions, whether between mind and matter, internal and external, idea and thing, animate and inanimate, are distinctions between objects—distinctions which may indifferently be viewed as due to the constructive activity of thought or to the self-revelation of the things. They are due to the constructive activity of thought in so far as it is the subject that introduces the distinctions under the stress of the ideal of a systematic unity ; on the other hand, they may also be called the self-revelation of the things in so far as it is ultimately the things to which the distinctions point and which the subject seeks to discover. But this profound truth that the objective revelation is possible only through the coherent construction of thought cannot be appreciated till the false identification of mind with the subject is definitely abandoned.

There seems to be, however, a considerable amount of indefiniteness and indecision among the modern thinkers as to the nature of the subject-object relation. Knowledge is sometimes considered as a unique relation, that cannot be analysed into anything simpler. On the other hand, there are realists who do not see anything unique in the knowledge relation ;

it is merely a relation of two distinct elements, and the elements are on the one hand the act of mind or the awareness, and on the other, the object of which it is aware. The latter description of the knowledge relation has attracted, on account of its very simplicity and directness, a large number of eminent thinkers of our time ; and it is thought to be particularly adapted to the realistic attitude for which the world is a democracy of things, whereas the other description suggests the idealistic prejudice for assigning a privileged position to mind.

• The fundamental error of this position, we suggest, is traceable to the psychological attitude, which is openly assumed by many to be the only right attitude to the problem of knowledge. The psychological attitude towards the problem of mind first established itself with the 'celebrated Locke' who is the pioneer of that line of thought which passing through our psychologists, particularly W. James, has penetrated the vast region of contemporary speculations. This attitude essentially consists in "treating the faculty of knowledge merely as an attribute of certain beings in the world by which they are characterized and distinguished from other beings, so that *e.g.*, as weight is the attribute of a stone, thought is the

The  
psychological  
and the epis-  
temological  
approach.

attribute of man.”<sup>1</sup> That this is the properly psychological attitude is openly accepted by James. “To the psychologist,” he tells us, “the minds he studies are *objects*, in a world of other objects. Even when he introspectively analyzes his own mind, and tells what he finds there, he talks about it in an objective way.”<sup>2</sup> His opinion on the cognitive relation is equally clear and emphatic. “*The psychologist's attitude towards cognition* will be so important in the sequel that we must not leave it until it is made perfectly clear. *It is a thorough-going dualism.* It supposes two elements, mind knowing and thing known, and treats them as irreducible. Neither gets out of itself or into the other, neither in any way *is* the other, neither *makes* the other. They just stand face to face in a common world, and one simply knows, or is known unto, its counterpart.”<sup>3</sup> This attitude, however, he warns his reader, in the preface, is peculiar to psychology which claims to be a natural science, and it is one of the assumptions which may stand in need of a metaphysics to “overhaul them clearly and thoroughly.”

<sup>1</sup> E. Caird : *The Critical Philosophy*, I. p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Principles of Psychology*, I, p. 183.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 218.

When, however, the restrictions of psychology, as pointed out by James, are removed and the psychological attitude is universalized, we get a metaphysics of the type which is represented, for example, by Professor Alexander. It is then no more a postulate of psychology as a particular branch of knowledge, but it is the universal attitude that "in respect of being or reality, all existences are on an equal footing" and that mind has no privileged place in the democracy of things. "This attitude of mind imposed by the empirical method," we are further told, "is and may fairly be called in philosophy the attitude of realism."<sup>1</sup> And the realistic metaphysics of mind, it is clearly seen by him, is only "borrowing a page from psychology."<sup>2</sup>

The epistemological attitude, on the other hand, is distinct from the psychological, and it was developed in the attempt to tackle with the difficulties in which thought was involved owing to its psychological attitude. The pioneer of this attitude was Kant. The essence of the epistemological attitude consists in treating the knowing mind, not as one object among other objects, but as that which is presupposed by

<sup>1</sup> *Space, Time and Deity*, I, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.



everything known or knowable and in treating knowledge not as an attribute of a particular thing but as the medium through which all objects reveal themselves. The epistemological attitude in respect of mind and knowledge, of which Kant was the protagonist, has almost always been maintained by post-Kantian idealism and is still defended by those who are generally called the neo-Kantians and the neo-Hegelians. They have no quarrel with the psychologists in so far as psychology is treated as a special science having for its objective the description and explanation of the mental processes as one group of objects among other objects. The difficulty begins when psychology, not content to remain as a special science, seeks to offer a theory of knowledge, and when the psychological attitude is taken to be identical with the epistemological. Thus Liebmann and Schultze, Green and Caird, distinguish between the norms of thought and the laws of psychology, and protest against the confusion of epistemology with psychology. The whole method of empirical psychology which claims to offer a theory of knowledge, according to Green, rests on the supposition that "the process of consciousness by which conceptions are formed is a series of psychological events" and it is "in principle the same false procedure"

as that of the geologist "who should treat the present conformation of the earth as the result of a certain series of past events, and yet, in describing these, should assume the present conformation as a determining element in each."<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, with regard to the ego, it is remarked that the really prolific element in Kant's system is the view of the noumenon "which he calls the ego, as the source of the categories, and thus at once of the order of phenomenon and of our knowledge of it, and again as itself constituting an intelligible world of ends freely pursued."<sup>2</sup> These remarks of Green on the nature of knowledge and of the ego may fairly be taken as representative of the epistemological attitude. And the contrast between the epistemological and the psychological attitude, as is apparent from this short description, is as strong as vital.

As suggested above, the uncritical acceptance of this psychological attitude is responsible for the fundamental error in most of the current theories of knowledge. From our analysis of knowledge undertaken in the foregoing chapters, it follows, however, that what escapes

<sup>1</sup> *Works*, I, p. 165.

<sup>2</sup> *Works*, III, p. 127.

determination through the categories is a void, a mere  $x$  for thought which cannot provide a ground for the explanation of anything, and so mind is only one of the determinate things of the world distinguished from other things by its peculiar property. And more this important truth is emphasized, the greater becomes the necessity of avoiding the confusion between the mind and the subject. The subject as the source of the categories of all knowledge, as the radiant centre by reference to which and in the light of which the universe exists, far from being identical with mind, is the inexpugnable pre-supposition of "objects in general," and consequently of mind as well.

Green on  
Self as  
knower.

"The greatest writer," it has been rightly remarked by Green, "must fall into confusions when he brings under the conceptions of cause and substance the self-conscious thought which is their source; and nothing else than this is involved in Locke's avowed enterprise of knowing that which renders knowledge possible as he might know any other object."<sup>1</sup> The epistemological theories, however have never lost sight of this important distinction. And Green is careful to remark that the chaos of antinomies which led Locke to perpetually

<sup>1</sup> *Works*, I, p. 109.

shifting conceptions of the mind can be solved only by the method "of which Kant is the parent" and which traces the antinomies "to their source in the application to the thinking Ego itself of conceptions, which it does indeed constitute in virtue of its presence to phenomena given under conditions of time, but under which for that very reason it cannot itself be known."<sup>1</sup> It is of paramount importance, therefore, to remember that "all knowing and all that is known, all intelligence and intelligible reality, indifferently consist in a relation between subject and object" and that the generic element in our definition of the knowable universe is "that it is such a relation."<sup>2</sup> "'Matter' in being known, becomes a relation between subject and object; 'mind' in being known, becomes so equally. It follows that it is incorrect to speak of the relation between 'matter and mind'—'mind' being understood as above—as if it were the same with that between subject and object. A mode of the latter relation constitutes each member alike of the former relation."<sup>3</sup>

In so far as contemporary thought is concerned, we may refer here to the pregnant remarks of another accomplished thinker of our age.

Lord  
Haldane  
on the  
place of  
self in  
know-  
ledge.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 386.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 387.

In order that we may really appreciate the place of the ego in knowledge, it is emphatically maintained by the late Lord Haldane, "we have ever to avoid the stereotyping of a general principle into the form of an image . . . . . Two of the most dangerous kinds of these have their origin in an unduly loose use of the conceptions of cause and of substance . . . . . The whole of the Berkeleian theory, and the essence of what is now called Mentalism, seem to depend on mind being regarded as a substance and knowledge as an activity or property of that substance. But the new Realists generally appear to make the same sort of assumption as the Mentalists about the adequacy of the category of substance, for they treat knowledge as the causal result of the operation of one set of things in the external world on another set of things there, the nervous system, imagined as copresent with them in a fundamentally real time and space."<sup>1</sup> But the category is not adequate, for, in the knowledge relation, "the object is not a thing confronting another thing, but arises solely by distinction made within knowledge which is really indivisible, and which appears as broken up only in virtue of acts of abstraction made by

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings of the British Academy, Vol. IX.*

and within itself.”<sup>1</sup> In this sense, therefore, knowledge should be regarded as foundational, and we should not seek to represent what is foundational by the analogy of anything but itself. “Its only appropriate terms are its own terms. We must not think of consciousness as a property, the consciousness *of* a person. The person *is* consciousness.”<sup>2</sup> All the difficulties in the analysis of the knowledge situation, it is remarked further, “seem to have arisen as soon as I fixed on the notion that my mind was a kind of thing, and that knowledge was a property of this thing.”<sup>3</sup>

To understand the place of the ego in knowledge, it is added, one has to recognize further that knowledge “creates its own distinctions within itself, and excepting through it and in its terms there is no intelligible significance to be found for either the self that knows or for the objects to which it is related. Knowledge thus may turn out to be the *prius* of reality, and like the *Elan* of Bergson or the Will of Schopenhauer, itself the ultimate reality, capable of expression in no terms beyond its own, inasmuch as creation is meaningless outside its scope.

<sup>1</sup> *The Reign of Relativity*, p. 288.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 328.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

Things and our reflections on them must alike belong to it. If indeed the *Elan* or the Will is intelligible it can, in this sense, be so only as the result of distinctions made within knowledge of some sort, and must fall within it as its own mere form and not as reality independent of it."<sup>1</sup>

The trans-  
cendental  
illusion.

Now, it is not necessary to repeat what we have already said about the meaning of 'reality independent of knowledge'. But in so far as the problem of self-consciousness is concerned, these remarks of the idealists on the distinction between the subject and the mind, we believe, represent one of the invaluable truths to ignore which is to open the gate to endless confusions in philosophy. Yet, it has been persistently ignored by thinkers who have otherwise shown keen insight into the nature of human mind and intelligence. It is, however, interesting to note that Kant who was the first to recommend the epistemological attitude in place of the psychological attitude of Locke foresaw that, contrary to all the warnings of criticism, a sort of transcendental illusion tempts us to misapply the categories, and that "nothing is more natural or seductive" than the transcendental illusion. However natural this

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.

illusion may be, it is at least clear that the problem of self cannot be dissociated from the epistemological distinction between the ego as the ultimate presupposition of knowledge and the ego as mind which is only one thing among other things of the world.

Nothing less than this illusion vitiates most of the contemporary theories of self. Having assumed the essential correctness of the psychological analysis of knowledge as implying a knowing mind, an object of knowledge and the act or process of knowing, philosophers proceed, with all the resources of analytic subtlety which they can possibly command, to discuss a number of questions which are supposed to be vital for understanding the nature of the knowledge situation. Does perception involve an act of thought over and above the content of the act and the object perceived? Is the physical object which is perceived a mere content of the conscious act, or is it only the stimulus which stimulates the sense organs? Is knowledge a peculiar re-action of the nervous system? Is it anything more than a characteristic of the total process from stimulus to re-action? What again, is consciousness? Is it a function or an entity, a relation or a quality? Lastly, what is the self? Is it anything more than

The questions which fall outside epistemology.



the causal nexus among a series of events, or the group of mental events? Is it a material structure possessing emergent qualities? Is not mind, quite as much as matter, derived from a neutral stuff which is neither mental nor material? These are some of the questions on the right solution of which, it is supposed, will depend our success in understanding the mechanism of knowledge.

Now, it may perhaps be admitted that all these questions have their own importance for a scientific study of mind and the mental processes, much as the scientific study of heat and electricity, light and magnetism, has its own importance for the physicist. But just as the investigation into the nature of light does not throw any light on the conditions under which alone it can be an object of thought; similarly, the psychological study of mind leaves unsolved the specifically epistemological problem of ascertaining the ultimate implications of knowledge. It is true that many an admirable attempt has been recently made to build up a psychological theory of knowledge. These attempts, however, we venture to suggest, are foredoomed to failure due to an initial assumption which is as seductive as it is erroneous. This assumption, to put it shortly, is that knowledge is a relation between two things,

That it is a very seductive stand-point is sufficiently proved by the wide acceptance and respectful treatment which it has always enjoyed in the past, and it is as strongly proved by the incapability of even accomplished contemporary thinkers to appreciate the alternative stand-point. What, however, is not adequately realized is that if knowledge be a relation between two things, then, the things which are related must have properties by which they are respectively distinguished, and these properties must already be within the knowledge of the psychologist who is offering an analysis of the total situation, namely, A knows B. If we make P stand for the psychologist, then, we can easily see the difference between A in relation to B and P in relation to A B. It is very tempting, no doubt, to think that the knowledge relation is adequately explained when A, B and the relation obtaining between them have been separately grasped. But, then, it is entirely forgotten that, epistemologically viewed, the relation between A and B presupposes the relation of P to AB. Once the latter relation drops out of sight, all the ingenuity of the world which the psychologist may bring to bear upon the former relation will not help him to discover what is involved in the latter. In other words, while AB alone is the object of our enquiry, we are not even in

The real  
problem.

sight of the logical implicates of there being such a fact as A-knowing-B. This, we believe, ought not to be overlooked in a theory of knowledge.

The  
objective  
attitude in  
epistemo-  
logy.

Yet, the predominantly objective attitude of contemporary philosophy has been nowhere more disastrous in its consequences than in its theories of knowledge. It may perhaps be asserted without the risk of being contradicted that the most pervasive characteristic of contemporary theories of knowledge is to reject explicitly what they cannot but accept implicitly. Thus, for instance, a philosopher will boldly attack the universal validity of the Law of Contradiction, while making a number of universal assertions himself; or, he will address himself to a genetic explanation of experience as it passes in succession through a number of stages, and then turn round all on a sudden to attack the wisdom of accepting as real the abstract time of science in the place of the concrete perceptual time; or, once more, he will seriously discuss whether consciousness exists or not and thus carry his inquisitiveness far beyond the universal doubt with which Descartes began, and will not stop to see why the latter could not doubt the fact of his doubting. Much unfruitful controversy, we submit, would come to an end if every epistemological discus-

sion had been preceded by an analysis of the factors present in the relation of P to AB, as above described. In the absence of such an analysis, it is immaterial whether A is conceived as a causal nexus, a material structure, the carrier of an intelligence-quotient, or what not. When, on the contrary, we look carefully into the logic of our own procedure and consider how a fact comes to exist for us, it may not be difficult to see that the fact of A-knowing-B, quite as much as other facts of the world, must imply the constitutive principles of unity and causality, space and time, and, above all, a synthesizing subject which is the source of the fundamental principles of knowledge and existence. Till this is clearly seen, the subject will continue to be identified with mind, and consequently, the problem of self-consciousness will remain as one of those problems which are popularly believed to have their origin only in the unusually sophisticated minds of philosophers.

One need not, however, go far to illustrate the legitimate consequences of the objective attitude in a theory of knowledge. Among other things, it leads to those self-refutatory conclusions to which a philosopher is committed by his unfortunate omission of the synthesizing subject, or, what is the same thing in another

Compara  
tive psy-  
chology  
on know-  
ledge.

language, by his attempt to describe knowledge in terms of something other than itself. With the naiveté of pre-Kantian empiricism, contemporary theories of knowledge would fain offer to prove to the hilt that knowledge can be adequately explained without bringing in such terms as mind, self, thought or consciousness; and if these terms loomed large in the old theories of knowledge, the reason presumably was that genetic and comparative psychology was then in its lisping infancy. But the twentieth century psychology with its emphatic protest against regarding the human mind as intrinsically different from the animal, and with its experiments on the behaviours of such animals, as rat and chimpanzee, is supposed to have shown the superfluity of these terms for an unbiassed study of the knowledge situation.

The circle involved in the appeal to comparative psychology for explaining knowledge may be briefly summarized in the words of Prof. Ritchie: "What makes it seem possible for the scientific investigator to begin at the beginning is the fact that he is not doing so. The student of the amoeba happens to be, not an amoeba, but a specimen of a highly developed vertebrate and knows at least something about the differentiated organs and functions of his own

body.”<sup>1</sup> The real force of this criticism is entirely missed if it be replied that we can interpret the lower by means of our knowledge of the higher, “while at the same time recognizing that the actual process has been a development of the lower upwards towards the higher.”<sup>2</sup> For, the really important point is, not whether man has come to be what he is through a long series of evolutionary stages, but whether evolution has a meaning except in the light of those principles which are generally recognized to go with self-conscious thought. In other words, if there is a real development, then it has a meaning only for a self-conscious individual who can interpret given facts according to the principles of thought. This shows the futility of describing knowledge in terms of something other than itself. And the fallacy vitiates, not only the genetic explanation of knowledge, but also the other types of materialistic descriptions which abound in contemporary philosophy. *E.g.*, when knowledge is supposed to be either a form of conditioned reflex, or a phenomenon that can exist only in relation to the satisfaction of desire, what is not seen clearly is that a reflex or a desire exists only for a subject and is

<sup>1</sup> *The Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Vol. 1, p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> James Ward : *The Realm of Ends*, p. 146.

inconceivable except in terms of knowledge. Similarly, when it is denied, on the basis of the data furnished by comparative psychology, that any "mutual occurrence has, in its own intrinsic nature, that sort of relational character that was implied in the opposition of subject and object, or of knower and known",<sup>1</sup> it is altogether ignored that even this denial reasserts the subject-object relation. *I.e.*, I can deny the relational character of animal experience only in so far as I am not one of the events which occur, and which are related to me as objects to a subject. This shows the utter impossibility of bringing it under any other relation. The self-refutation of all such attempts to go beyond knowledge could be avoided, as suggested above, if, contemporary thinkers, without rushing to startling theories, had stopped to enquire into the implications of there being a world of facts, rather than indulging in speculative details about the nature of facts.

To illustrate what appear to us to be insuperable difficulties in psychological theories of knowledge, we can do nothing better than to consider, in some detail, the views of one of the profound thinkers of our time to whom we have already referred at several places.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. B Russell: *An Outline of Philosophy*, p. 252.

## CHAPTER XI

### Prof. Alexander on the knowledge situation

Prof. Alexander's analysis of the knowledge relation is avowedly opposed to the views of those who say: "no mind, no object: in the absence of mind there would be not only no experience in the sense that there would be no experiencer, but nothing to be experienced. . . . Even for Kant the world of empirical reality is a world of ideas, unthinkable therefore apart from mind. . . . But *prima facie* there is no warrant for the assumption (that the cognitive relation is unique), still less for the dogma that because all experience implies a mind, that which is experienced owes its being and its qualities to mind."<sup>1</sup>

False  
views on  
idealism.

• Now, the question is if any idealist worth the name has really denied the essential correctness of the commonsense belief that what is experienced does not owe its being and its qualities to the experiencing mind. We have

<sup>1</sup> *Space, Time, and Deity*, I, p. 6.



already pursued the enquiry to sufficient details to show that the correlativity of mind and thing, or better subject and object, does not mean that the thing owes its being and qualities to mind; on the contrary, knowledge presupposes an independent world of things not at all dependent upon the fact that somebody knows it. The only truth that the theory of correlativity seeks to emphasise is what the modern realists make it a point to insist on in their own way, the truth, namely, that knowledge is not a matter of reproducing a recalcitrant world which gets distorted in being known, nor is it a copying of a world that cannot be directly reached. Both the views, phenomenalism and representationism, agree in bifurcating 'nature', and in their campaign against this tendency to divide the world in twain, the realists are unconsciously paying homage to a theory which they are consciously anxious to shun. We are always in direct contact with reality, and knowledge does not involve a distortion in the nature of reality—these are the truths which the theory of correlativity seeks to establish once for all. The world of empirical reality is a world of ideas, not in the sense that we know only appearances as distinct from reality, nor in the sense that the reality exists only while we know it. The only sense in which it is true to say

that the world is a world of ideas is that the world is what we find it to be in the knowledge relation. It is true that there are features of the world that are not known at a given stage of the knowledge process, but those features are not essentially unknowable, for the world with its manifold characters must be ultimately revealed in the knowledge relation. In this sense again it is true that the world is unthinkable apart from mind. It is only the subjective idealist who uses the term idea in the obnoxious sense of a mental state—a sense that has become obsolete after the Kantian analysis of knowledge.

We must not forget here the note of warning so recently sounded by Green that “the phrase that all ‘knowledge is of phenomena’ has become an accepted commonplace of the modern enlightenment. Like every commonplace, it is of value or otherwise according as to those by whom it is used, it is or is not more than a phrase. To enter into its meaning is the true baptism into philosophy but a polemic against ‘ontologists’ who are supposed to dispute it is no proof that the baptism has been effectually undergone.”<sup>1</sup> We effectively cut ourselves off from the truth that the phrase is intended to

<sup>1</sup> *Works*, I, p. 377.

convey when we accept the standpoint of the physiologist or the subjective idealist; for, an idea or appearance, then, no more means what is relative to consciousness, but a mental state produced by the physical stimulus and the molecular changes of a nervous organism, and here, in the words of Green, we find the natural man surviving in an explanation of them which neutralises the admission that they are appearances. We may also remember in this connexion the indignant complaint of Robert Adamson against Lange's reconstruction of the Kantian theory of appearances on the lines of modern physiology and psychology.<sup>1</sup>

With his usual insight, however, Prof. Alexander clearly sees that "the contrast of the empirical method with . . . idealism . . . is not in all respects, perhaps in the gravest respects, valid of the form of idealism which, under the usual name of absolute idealism, has been and is so influential on thinking in this country."<sup>2</sup> So far as the essence of idealism consists in its faith that the truth is the whole, in comparison with which all finites are incomplete and therefore false, the proposition, he thinks, might be accepted by other doctrines

<sup>1</sup> R. Adamson, *Philosophy of Kant, Lecture IV*,

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7,

than idealism with the omission of the concluding phrase, 'and therefore false.' It will be futile to discuss at this place the sense in which Bradley condemns the appearances as false. But we have here the words of another exponent of absolutism who "welcomes the neo-realist's assertion that the world of sense-perception has being in its own right, and that the splendours and values which we seem to contemplate directly are apprehended by us as they truly are. That philosophy does not volatilize, so to speak, our world of fact and externality, but accepting for it all that it claims of existence and reality, then passes on to interpret its conditions, and assign its significance more profoundly, I hold to be the eternal lesson of thinkers like Plato and Hegel; and in recent thought it was certainly the fundamental position of T. H. Green.<sup>1</sup> And Bosanquet thinks that even Bradley would agree that particular things in space are not in themselves "altogether different from what they look like to us except in the sense of the strictly continuous and additional determinations proffered by physical science." That is, the finite things, according to this philosophy, are appearances and hence false not in the sense that they do not belong to the real world; their falsity consists

<sup>1</sup> Bosanquet, *The Meeting of Extremes*, p. 2.

in their incompleteness *for us*. As we can conceive of them only in those features that are so far revealed to us, the incompleteness of our knowledge of them is known by the contradictions in the knowledge so far attained. As thus interpreted, Prof. Alexander would perhaps have no quarrel with the absolutist in this regard. While noting this agreement, however, we may now pass on to the consideration of what really prevents him from realising fully the implications of the admission that truth is the whole.

Prof S.  
Alexander's psy-  
chological  
bias.

Admitting that all philosophies are concerned with experience as a whole, Prof. Alexander points out that "the real difference between idealism and realism lies in their starting-point or the spirit of their method. For the one, in some form or other, however much disguised, mind is the measure of things and the starting-point of enquiry. For realism mind has no privileged place except in its perfection."<sup>1</sup> After this initial description of the contrast it is added: "Any experience whatever may be analysed into two distinct elements and their relation to one another. The two elements which are the terms of the relation are, on the one hand the act of mind or the awareness, and on the other the object of which it is aware; the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

relation between them is that they are together or compresent in the world which is thus so far experienced." Strictly speaking, however, it is further pointed out, the two elements united in an experience "are but an act or event with a mental character and a non-mental object of just such character as it bears upon its face . . . Always however, the object is a distinct existence from the mind which contemplates it, and in that sense independent of the mind." The mind's knowledge of itself, however, is different from its knowledge of the objects. "The act of mind is an enjoyment; the object is contemplated. . . . The contemplation of a contemplated object is of course, the enjoyment which is together with that object or is aware of it."

Now, this analysis of the knowledge relation is surely quite ingenious, and as a psychological description, is perhaps correct too. But can we thus identify the psychological analysis with the epistemological? When it is remonstrated that "you are including amongst the things to be examined not merely physical objects but minds themselves," is it satisfactory to reply that it "may be taken as a hypothesis for investigating reality" and then point to the empirical method for the justification of the procedure? The problem of knowledge together with the enquiry into the ultimate

The difficulties arising out of the bias :—(a) we cannot know whether a description is true or not.

pre-suppositions of experience are perhaps such as would preclude the possibility of a psychological solution, for the simple reason that psychology as a science must accept the validity of all those conditions under which alone knowledge of anything is possible. That is, psychology does not seem to be in a position to decide whether a particular description of the mental facts is true or false ; all that can be vouchsafed by direct introspection is, for example, that a desire or a pain is there. But to *know* the desire in the strict sense of the term is to refer it to its conditions under which it exists as a definite event in the mental history of the individual, and this knowledge is impossible for an individual that only 'enjoys' the desire. An 'enjoyed' fact may be referred to wrong conditions, and then our description of the fact is false in spite of the enjoyment. And it seems to follow from this that the fact of enjoyment does not decide the question of the validity of a description. It is this fatal ambiguity in the term 'knowledge' which appears to be responsible for Prof. Alexander's belief that epistemological questions can be properly solved within the bounds of psychology.

(b) We cannot explain how mind knows the world.

Psychology may, of course, make the mind an object of investigation, but it cannot account for the knowledge which such investigations

presuppose. Mind as a sentience or as a collection of enjoyed facts becomes an object in being known, and thus presupposes the subject or knower, whether the subject be the same mind that carries on the investigation or another mind. And even when mind knows itself, not simply as an enjoyed fact, but as an object among other objects in the universe, then we must distinguish between the mind that functions as a subject and the mind that enjoys itself; in the latter aspect it is only a particular thing possessed of the property of self-enjoyment and, so to speak, impenetrable to other things existing side by side with it in the universe. But in the former aspect, nothing is impenetrable to it; the sun and the star, the past and the present, a feeling and a desire,—in fact, the whole choir of heaven and earth can be an object of its investigation. This in fact is an old lesson we learn at the hands of Kant.

A psychology that aspires to take the place of epistemology must either identify subject with mind, or ignore altogether the difficulty how a mind which is one object among other objects can yet be the knower of all objects including itself. And Prof. Alexander's description of the subject-object relation, if we understand it rightly, is throughout characterised by an attempt to reconcile the assertion that



mind knows with the belief that it is one object among other objects; in this regard he goes back to Locke and seems to ignore the value of Kant together with a large number of philosophers who are of Kant's mind. Of course, the assertion of a philosopher, however great he may be thought to be, may stand in need of revision and correction in the light of the truths discovered by a later generation. But in revising his views, it may perhaps be expected of us that we should clearly indicate where his analysis is defective and how his arguments are vitiated. This task, we believe, would be very easy for a philosopher of Mr. Alexander's learning and penetration. But, unfortunately for his readers, he chooses to avoid the direct method of criticism, and contents himself with saying that it would be a legitimate reply that "the existence of minds as one group among the existences of the world, as thus postulated by the empirical method, may be taken as a hypothesis for investigating reality."<sup>1</sup> It is true that we "do not raise these questions in science" but "assume the existence of life or matter" and then simply "ask what it is." But we cannot perhaps adopt the same procedure in the analysis of knowledge where the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 11,

problem is not to know what a particular thing is, but to know what is implied in knowing anything at all. And the analysis that is intended to incline the reader "from the beginning to the initial soundness of the hypothesis," as we have suggested above, leaves the problem exactly where it was.

In view of the fact that the real problem of knowledge is nowhere directly handled by Prof. Alexander, we are compelled to think that his analysis of the subject-object relation is marked by a continuous shifting between two meanings of the term mind. When he is thinking of the mind as an object, knowledge is taken to be a relation of compresence between two distinct elements each having a 'character' that determines its behaviour to the other. As thus regarded, there is nothing unique in the cognitive relation. "The plant lives, grows, and breathes, and twines around a stick. The material body resists, or falls, or sounds when struck, or emits light when touched by the sun. The mind knows."<sup>1</sup> When, on the other hand, he is thinking of the mind as a subject, he is compelled to distinguish between enjoyment and contemplation and wants his readers to believe that mind is never an object to itself ;

The term  
"mind"  
used with  
a two-fold  
meaning.

<sup>1</sup> *Space, Time, and Deity*, II, p. 81.

it is only from the standpoint of angelic contemplation that the mind whose 'being' consists in 'enjoying itself in certain ways' could be an object in the same way as the tree is an object of our contemplation. As thus regarded, there is a certain type of uniqueness belonging to consciousness, though "to be conscious of something else is not unique."<sup>1</sup> This description, however, as is frankly admitted, is not wanting in difficulties, but they are said to be due to our objectifying tendency.'

Green's  
criticism  
is not  
met.

The fact is that having accepted the psychological method as capable of solving problems of knowledge, Prof. Alexander thinks that the knowledge relation is sufficiently explained by analysing it into two terms and a relation obtaining between them. The consequence is that he never raises the properly epistemological problem at all. That is, he assumes, without further enquiry into the implications involved in the fact of our coming to know a world, that the mind knows itself and the non-mental objects simply by attending to the facts. Now, even granting that there is a type of experience which consists of the two terms and a relation, there is not at such a stage knowledge of a world, with its distinctions between mind and matter, facts and fictions,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

and as common to different minds. So much we know on the authority of the best psychologists of our time, who distinguish between different levels of experience and tell us that the trans-subjective world does not exist for a subject until experience has far advanced beyond the level where the mind only attends to a partially differentiated continuum. So Green's grievance against the philosophy of his time can be repeated against the contemporary attempts to treat epistemology as a chapter in psychology—the grievance, namely, that the psychologist, in so far as he does not see the processes involved in our coming to know a world at all, has not taken what is the first step to the solution of the problem of knowledge; and though professing to discard metaphysics, he has really accepted the metaphysics, “of a pre-Kantian or even of a pre-Berkeleian age.”

The numerous problems with which contemporary thought is occupied, and the bewildering difference of opinions to which philosophers have committed themselves, as we have admitted above, may have their importance in the history of speculation. But what seems to be more important is to realise clearly that all these are only special problems and so have their limits. For instance, it is surely a very interesting

The problem of sense cannot solve the problem of knowledge.

problem whether the *sensa* are mind-dependent or not, and it will, when the discussions settle down to a general consensus of opinion, make an important contribution to the stock of human knowledge. But the discussions on the nature and status of the *sensa* cannot help us to understand the conditions implied in the general possibility of the *sensa* ; that is, they cannot give a clue to the understanding of the conditions under which alone the world of *sensa* comes to be a world *for us*. The *sensa* are after all certain events or actual facts existing in the world, or at least they mean to refer to some real aspects of the world of existence. And consequently the discussions about their nature have to presuppose the existence of the world and the validity of objective reference ; and it follows from this that the conditions of objective reference in general, or the conditions of the possibility of there being a world for us are not adequately explained while we busy ourselves only with the special problem of determining the relation of the minds and the *sensa*, both of which are after all two types of facts or elements existing in the world. It may make us wiser to know the relations obtaining between the moon and the tide, or the rise of a comet and a disaster ; it may help us in regulating our conduct to know that to sow

in the seed-time is the way to reap in the harvest, or that the honest man is always triumphant in the long run. But knowledge of these facts and their relations is not knowledge of the conditions implied in the *existence for us* of the moon and the tide, the comet and the disaster, or, the man and the triumph, as real elements in a real world. The latter alone is the real problem of epistemology proper, of which it was Kant's merit to have attempted a solution for the first time and which he formulated as : How is Nature possible ?

Psychology, as well as physics, may begin its investigations with the assumption of a world that has to be known. Assuming that there is a world, it is the business of the psychologist to trace the different stages in the development of the individual's knowledge of that world. But in thus tracing the growth of knowledge, he has to assume the validity of certain principles that underlie his account of the mental development of the individual. The psychologist therefore cannot, or rather need not, defend the validity of the principles underlying his procedure, and may conveniently remain indifferent to the difficulties which Hume felt as an epistemologist. The perplexity, however, begins when the psychologist claims to defend a particular theory of knowledge and at the same time claims also

Hume's difficulties do not admit of a psychological answer.

the privilege of remaining indifferent to Hume's difficulties. As mind is a thing among other things in the world, and as the different stages of its development are real stages through which the mind is supposed to pass, so the psychologist's account must, on pain of being chimerical, correspond to the real nature of the mind and of the various stages through which it really passes. That is, the psychological explanation of mind is the explanation of certain real facts of the world, however different may be their 'character' from that of the other events generally known as non-mental or physical. And hence to explain the growth of the individual's experience is not to vindicate the objective validity of those principles that underlie that explanation.

Conclud-  
ing re-  
marks.

From these considerations, it is clear that Psychology as a science of certain facts of the world cannot solve the problem of the possibility of those facts. And if contemporary thinkers do not realise this difference between the functions of psychology and epistemology, the reason is ultimately to be traced to the difficulty of grasping the nature of the subject-object relation as the basic presupposition of all knowledge. The subject-object relation, as it is conceived in epistemology, we must remark at the risk of repetition, is not merely the

relation between two distinct entities each having a 'character' of its own ; all the entities, in so far as they are entities of the real world, are objects to be known, whatever may be the difference in the ways in which they are to be respectively known. The mode of knowing the mental acts may be different from that in which the non-mental facts are known, so that we might be warranted in thinking that the former are enjoyed while the latter are the objects of contemplation. But in so far as the acts and the objects are both elements of a real world, to know that they are related in the way of co-presence is to know nothing about the conditions implied in referring them to the real world ; yet, only as thus referred to the world that we can think of their relation to each other. In this sense, to put the difference in the words of Green, a mode of the subject-object relation constitutes each member alike of the relation between 'mind' and 'appearance.'

None can afford to forget here the remarks of E. Caird on the nature of Criticism. " We may speak of man's knowing himself in two ways : of a knowledge of himself in which he is regarded simply as the self, the thinking subject which is implied in all objects of knowledge ; and of a knowledge of himself as a human being distinguished from other human



beings from the animals and from nature in general, and standing in definite relations to each of them. With the latter kind of knowledge of himself which is the subject-matter of psychology, criticism, in the primary aspect of it, has nothing to do; for this knowledge of mind . . . is not the beginning, but rather the end, of science; and it cannot be used as a test or criterion for that which is more simple than itself. Criticism has to deal with the knowledge of mind only in so far as mind is presupposed in everything known or knowable."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Critical Philosophy, I., p. 11.*

We have examined here in some details only Prof. Alexander's views on self. And though it would be interesting to make an equally detailed study of the theories of Messrs. W. James and J. Ward, or of Broad, Russell and Laird, yet as it is difficult to find another contemporary thinker who has made a more successful attempt than Prof. Alexander to vindicate the psychological attitude in epistemology, we have found his views very helpful in exposing the short-comings of that attitude. No theories of knowledge or of self can stand the scrutiny of critical thought which tend to confuse the transcendental factors of experience with the results of experience; and so whatever *positive* description of knowledge or of self may be given ultimately, we must at least be clear as to what they are *not*. And this negative attitude is perhaps more important for avoiding errors than a positive description.

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## CHAPTER XII

### The Knower and Knowledge

Notwithstanding the distance that separates us from the philosophers who are generally known as idealists and realists respectively, the kernel of truth reached through the arguments of the fore-going pages has evidently a closer affinity with idealism. For, our conclusion, briefly stated, has been this that self is the inexpugnable basis of Reality ; it is the ground or the presupposition without which Reality cannot manifest itself. And this is evidently opposed to all forms of realistic belief, particularly as realism is defined in contemporary philosophy.

The epistemological theories are not without difficulties.

By Reality, again, we have always meant, not anything inscrutable or inaccessible ; it is simply the name for all that really exist, as distinct from all that appear to exist. This distinction between reality and appearance, as has been already explained, cannot be denied except by a serious misunderstanding of the real issues of knowledge. If everything that appears as real had been accepted as

really real, there could be no meaning in the search after truth through mutual criticism; for, the assumption implicit in philosophical criticism is that what appears to be real to the criticised position is not so in reality.

The self, again, has been described by us, more negatively than positively. We have indiscriminately called it the synthesising principle, the unifying agent, thought, consciousness or knowledge. On the negative side, it has been defined as the other of thing, or the subject for which exists every object, and so, as occupying the centre of the world of knowledge. It would be, however, doing scanty justice to the psychological theories of self which have been examined above if we had not considered some of the formidable objections that have been historically raised to the theories that seek to abandon the category of substance-attribute in expounding the nature and place of self in the world. It seems to us that every theory of self has concentrated its strength more on attacks against the rival theories than on patching up the gaps existing in its own camp.

In stating the objections and in considering their respective answers, it will be useful to make occasional references to the views of the philosophers of India, and so we must begin with a word of explanation in justification of

this novel procedure. There is a serious division of opinion on the possibility of a fruitful comparative study of the problems of philosophy particularly from the standpoint of Indian philosophy and that of western thought. That there is an element of danger in thinking modern problems in terms of ancient thought cannot be altogether denied. Of the many disadvantages which a modern exponent of an ancient system of thought has of necessity to encounter, there is perhaps none more subversive and ruinous than the tendency to get oneself entangled in the meshes of ideas originating from an entirely different type of thought with implications that become altogether misleading when divorced from their historic context. It not only stands in the way of a full appreciation of what is unique and instructive in the old speculation, but it leads to more disastrous consequences, especially when the exposition proceeds on a comparative basis. Failing to accentuate those points in it which constitute its real strength, the immediate task of the interpreter reduces itself to devising means for establishing its speculative claims at any cost. Far-fetched explanations, twistings and strainings are the inevitable results of such a procedure. Most of the problems of philosophy, it is important to realise, are intimately

connected with the spirit of the age and the intellectual tradition of a nation. This is true not only of the problems, it equally holds good of the nature of the methods employed and of the directions in which intellectual satisfaction is sought.

The source of the difficulties is perhaps to be traced ultimately to the laws of development with which biological investigations have made us familiar. The principles of differentiation and integration which underlie the growth of organic life and which have lighted the paths of investigations in the fields of psychology, sociology and many other allied sciences, have a very important bearing on the present subject. Our concepts, those intellectual moulds with which we have inevitably to work in philosophy, grow in definiteness and fixity with the progress of speculative efforts, to solve certain problems. And in the intellectual struggle that is born out of these efforts, only those concepts survive which prove most efficient in reconciling the conflicting demands of the age. Hence the danger of reading an old thinker in terms of the new. The external wrappings of a concept may continue unchanged long after its life has completely disappeared. The word 'idea' is a case in point. This term, as is well known, though used by a long succession

of thinkers, has still remained a most ambiguous term of philosophy; the archetypal essence of phenomenal things, the Platonic meaning of the term, has very little in common with its modern meaning as phenomenon. Another important consequence of these intellectual struggles is to destroy the elasticity of the concepts by introducing sharper distinctions and more rigid niceties into their contents. Much of the obscurity which we find present in the previous systems of thought arises from the comparatively high differentiations of the conceptual organism which we bring to bear on their simple homogeneity. Spirit, matter, content, reason and many other concepts which are most in use in the philosophical speculations of our time are, by reason of the very preciseness of meaning which makes them valuable instruments in the hands of the modern critic, likely to lead to confusion of issues when pressed into the service of an interpreter of Greek philosophy. •The entirely different interpretations which it has been possible to put, for instance, on the teachings of Parmenides are mainly due to the gulf which separates the modern notion of pure being from the Eleatic conception of being; the confusion arises from the attempt at further determination, in the light of modern thought, of what was homogeneous and little differentiated

in the original sytem. To define it as the 'full', the mass that fills space, is to introduce an amount of determinateness into the notion of being which is too much for its simplicity. Hence the monism of Parmenides and Herac-  
litus has been very aptly compared to the block of marble which may be formed into a basin or a Jupiter. In the absence of sharp distinctions in the Greek conceptions of spirit and matter, our modern notions with their highly differentiated contents are hardly enlightening when used for labelling the earlier speculations. The inadequacy of such terms as materialism and spiritualism to be fit titles for the pre-Socratic thoughts is evident from the fact that even the Aristotelian conception of soul has none of those associations which it has come to possess for us through the progressively refined discussions of later ages. After the Cartesian opposition of the extended to the thinking substance, it is not easy for modern thinkers to identify the physiological conception of function with the psychological conception of mind.

The uni-  
versal  
dialectic  
of thought  
leads to  
similarity  
of contro-  
versy.

It is therefore but natural that many a significant concept of Indian philosophy should appear as too vague for any profitable use in modern controversy; and so far there is some justification in Prof. Mackenzie's complaint that "Indian Philosophy, in spite of all that

has been written about it, remains somewhat dark to most English readers," and that the strenuous efforts that have so far been made to show the connections between Indian and European speculations are "not wholly successful."<sup>1</sup> But, while admitting these difficulties in the comparative method, we cannot subscribe to the opinion that Indian Philosophy 'is too antiquated to be of any use for giving us any substantial help in modern controversy. The dialectic of universal thought knows no limits of time and space. It may be difficult to detect its presence in a controversy that is primarily concerned with special problems arising out of the particular state of the spiritual environment of the time. But the dialectic must show itself in a clearer form in proportion to the degree to which the problems grow wider and more general. The problems of one and many, of God and man, of cause and effect, of self and not-self,—such problems are in a sense the eternal problems of thought; and every serious effort to solve them must force thought to its immanent dialectic. Now, as the problem of self is one of those problems on which the attention of Indian philosophers has been focussed for a vast stretch of time, nothing would be more natural than that they should

<sup>1</sup> *Ultimate Values*, p. 78,



have thought over this problem on lines strikingly similar to those of modern thought. Nay, the problem of self is perhaps the one problem in discussing which Indian genius has showed itself at its best ; and so here a modern student may be surprised at the ample supply of valuable dialectical weapons in the armoury of the Indian schools, which are as good for offence and defence in the battles of modern philosophy as they were when they were first forged.

The epistemological attitude of the Vedāntic analysis.

Now, the epistemological theories of self and their distinction from the psychological theories, as defined in the last two chapters, have been subjects of perpetual disputes in Indian philosophy. It is not possible at this place to enter upon a detailed study of the history of the disputes, though this would be necessary for showing how a comparative study of the Indian and the western systems of thought may be profitably pursued with a considerable clarification of both. Yet, it may be interesting to consider briefly some of the arguments that were directed against the psychological theories of self. And as the epistemological attitude was perhaps nowhere more prominent than in the Vedānta analysis of knowledge, we may restrict ourselves to some of the pregnant observations of Saṅkara who is admittedly one of the most illustrious exponents of the Vedānta Philosophy.

Saṅkara believes, in agreement with the thinkers of the different schools of thought, that self-knowledge is the only way to the attainment of the Highest Purpose of life. After this initial agreement, however, he differs fundamentally from them in regard to the method of self-realisation as well as the nature of the self which has to be known. Postponing the consideration of his method of self-knowledge, we shall consider briefly his observations on the nature of self. Like every philosopher, he begins by remarking that every theory of self must of necessity accept the intuitive certainty of its existence. None can deny *ātmāstitvam*<sup>1</sup> and it is impossible for us to entertain the idea even of its being capable of refutation ; for, it is the presupposition of all proof, and in this sense it is *svayamsiddha* or self-established. In other words, the ultimate transcendental condition of knowledge cannot be refuted, for it is presupposed in the very act of refutation.<sup>2</sup>

• That the self exists, therefore, needs no proof, but what does require proof is the special nature or the 'what' of the self. And it is here that one is confronted with a bewildering variety of opinions, and consequently no theory

<sup>1</sup> S. B. I., 1. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *ya eva hi nirākartā tadeva tasya swarūpam—*  
S. B. II., 3. 7.

can be accepted as true which does not stand the scrutiny of logical sifting; and if a particular theory about the specific nature of the self satisfies the requirements of strict proof or demonstration it will, then and then only, show the way to the Highest Purpose of life, or Self-realisation. Now, Saṅkara develops his own theory partly by positive and partly by negative arguments, and his genius, we believe, shines at its best when he adopts the negative method of determining what the self is not. And for appreciating this negative approach we may begin with his criticism of materialism. The materialist, as Saṅkara puts it, does not admit the distinction of the self from the body, but assumes that consciousness springs from the combination of the material elements each of which is severally devoid of consciousness, when they are transformed into the shape of a body. Thus, according to this theory, man is only a body qualified by consciousness, and this consciousness arises in the same way as the intoxicating quality which is produced out of the mixture of certain materials.<sup>1</sup>

The  
defect of  
material-  
ism.

Saṅkara's refutation of materialism is strikingly modern, and it substantially anticipates the line of argument followed by contemporary

<sup>1</sup> S. B. III., 3. 53,

thinkers. One of the considerations which he brings forward against materialism is that the bodily and the mental processes are not organically connected as is evident from the facts of death and dream. The materialist's conclusion that the psychological processes are the qualities of the body is drawn from the fact of their concomitance; but if the former had been organically connected with the body, just as the physical qualities of form and shape are connected with it, they should have existed even at death. Conversely, it is not always true that the psychological processes cannot continue when the bodily processes are at abeyance, and the fact of dream may be cited in evidence. Again, even accepting that mind and body are inseparable from each other, it does not follow that conscious processes are mere attributes of the body, for the body may after all be an auxiliary or *upakarana* of the mental processes. The psychological process of perception, for example, is conditioned by the existence of light, yet it would be absurd to say that the perceptual process is an attribute of the lamp. Similarly, the bodily processes may be an indispensable condition of perception, so that "perception takes place where there is a body; and does not take place where there is none". But from this it does not follow that

the perceptual process is a mere quality of the body.

Thus when consciousness is reduced to an epiphenomenon or a kind of phosphorescence superadded to the neural changes in the brain, or again when definite mental processes are localized in the convolutions, Saṅkara would take such theories to be based on the confusion of the mere *upakarana* with the cause. That is, the defect here consists in regarding B to be the attribute of A merely on the basis of a factual relation between them. It is interesting in this connection to remember Bergson's remarks on the theory of parallelism. That there is solidarity between the life of the mind and the life of the body, he points out, has never been contested by any one; but "it is a long way from that to maintain that the cerebral is the equivalent of the mental, that one might read in a brain whatever is taking place in the corresponding mind. A coat is solidary with the nail on which it hangs; it falls if the nail is removed; it sways if the nail is loose and shaken; it is torn or pierced if the nail is too pointed; it does not follow from all this that each detail of the nail corresponds to a detail of the coat, nor that the nail is the equivalent of the coat, still less that nail and coat are the same thing. So, too, the mind

is undeniably attached to the brain, but from this it does not in the least follow that in the brain is pictured every detail of the mind, nor that the mind is a function of the brain. All that observation, experience, and consequently science, allows us to affirm is the existence of a certain *relation* between brain and mind."<sup>1</sup>

The sharpest weapon of his dialectic armoury, however, is brought into operation when Saṅkara raises the ultimate question of the subject-object relation. What is the nature of the consciousness which is supposed to have its origin in the material elements? The material elements and their products are objects of consciousness; but consciousness could not have rendered them objects of itself, if it had been a mere quality of the elements<sup>2</sup> The fire cannot burn itself, nor can the acrobat mount on his own shoulders. Similarly, a quality cannot be conscious of itself as an object. In other words, consciousness for which exist the material elements cannot be itself a quality of matter, but is something different (*vyatireka*) from it. We must note that Saṅkara here insists on two ultimate principles of knowledge

Consciousness must be different from the object, as it is the principle of objectivity.

<sup>1</sup> *Mind Energy*, p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> *Nahi bhūtabhautikadharmena satā chaitanyena bhūtabhautikāni viṣayikriyeran—S. B. III. 3, 54.*

that are implied in each other. That for which objects exist must be distinct from the latter, and it is only the conscious self which can make anything an object of itself. The object may be either an external thing, or again it may be something belonging to the empirical self or mind,<sup>1</sup> but in either case it implies the subject which is distinct from it, and which is the conscious self. The subject, therefore, cannot be identified with the material elements, nor can it be taken to be a quality of matter. The materialistic conception of self then is ultimately based on a false analysis of the subject-object relation.

History  
exists for  
self.

This self which makes everything an object of itself, Sankara further adds, has the unique characteristic of recognising itself as a unity in spite of the difference in the states that are in succession, as is illustrated in the assertion 'I saw this.' The object of knowledge, he urges elsewhere, changes according as it is something past or something future or something present; but the knowing agent does not change; its nature is rather an eternal presence.<sup>2</sup> In other words, the self for which exist the past the present and the future, that is, time, cannot be itself in time; it is rather the transcendental

<sup>1</sup> *Bahyādhyātmikāni bhūtabhautikāni* ;

<sup>2</sup> *Sarvadū vartamānasvabhāvatvāt*—S. B. 11. 3. 7.

unity which is presupposed by every object including time itself. This is expressed in another way when it is said that the self is not an effect. As it is self-established, or rather established before the establishment of an object, it is, to use a term made current since Kant's analysis of knowledge, the transcendental condition of objects in general. One may refute that which is adventitious (*āgantuka*); none, for example, can assume the reality of such things as ether or *ākāśa* before it is established through the means of right knowledge. But the self, "as being the presupposition (*āśraya*) of the process of proof is itself established previously to the act of demonstration." The self, therefore, is *svayamsiddha* or the inexpugnable presupposition of every process of proof, and in this sense it is never an effect; for an effect always implies an antecedent condition, and consequently the ultimate condition of experience cannot itself be called an effect.

It is abundantly clear from these weighty observations of Sāṅkara that his line of refutation of materialism is substantially identical with that of Kant and the Neo-Kantians. Materialism and naturalism seek to trace the origin of that synthetic principle of knowledge which is the ultimate presupposition of matter



as well as of history.<sup>1</sup> But there can be no consciousness of succession in the absence of a self which does not change with the changes in the objects. Similarly, Green complains that he finds no help from Spencer "in regard to the question whether the consciousness, called experience of force, is itself an effect of force." Spencer, it is pointed out, ignores the synthetic principle without which the successive feelings "could not form the consciousness of change which that of force presupposes."<sup>2</sup> As this synthetic aspect of the self is brought to clearer prominence in Saṅkara's criticism of Buddhism, its further consideration may be postponed here. Meanwhile it is important to note that Saṅkara's criticism of the Lokāyata doctrine is equally significant in relation to the diverse forms of modern materialism which have been developed by such distinguished thinkers as Watson, Holt or Russell, in so far as they seek to reduce the self or consciousness to something other than itself. All these attempts, in spite of the great success which has crowned the efforts of the comparative psychologist and the experimentalist, do not deviate from the fundamental tenet of old materialism as advocated

<sup>1</sup> *Atītānāgatavartamūnabhāvena anyathābhavatyapi jñātavye na jñāturanyathābhāvostī.*

<sup>2</sup> *Works I., p. 439.*

by John Toland, La Mettrie, Diderot and Cabanis. Whether thought be reduced to the function of brain as taste is a function of the tongue, or digestion the function of the stomach, or secretion of the bile the function of the liver, or the function of thought be altogether replaced by that of the nervous system which then takes the place of the self or mind, the fundamental assumption remains the same. The common fallacy of these attempts, according to Saṅkara, is the fallacy of reduction of the ultimate presupposition or *āśraya* of knowledge and proof to something other than itself, and the consequent fallacy of regarding that to be *āgantuka* which is in fact *svayam-siddha*.

Buddhism represents the materialist's fallacy from another side and it is in his refutation of the philosophy of becoming that Saṅkara's views on the nature of self become more pointed and articulate than anywhere else. The doctrine of momentariness, he points out, refutes itself when it is extended to the knowing self or the self that perceives. And it is the fact of *pratyabhijnā* which may be regarded as the hard rock on which must be wrecked every theory that dissolves the self into a series of passing events. Recognition implies the unity of consciousness which persists through the time that elapses between

The synthesis of recognition is impossible in a world of pure becoming.

perception and remembrance. That is, the self that remembers must be identical with the self that perceived, for "what one man has experienced is not remembered by another man." Not only this, but the theory of becoming when applied to the self cannot even account for the possibility of an intelligible assertion. Because every assertion or sentence is composed of different letters which are uttered in succession, and if the self be a series whose terms are momentary, the successive items cannot be held together into the unity of an intelligible assertion. It is only when each item in the succession is combined with that which comes after it by something which is not itself in succession that the different letters form themselves into an intelligible sentence. But, obviously, there is no room for such a synthetic principle in a doctrine which reduces the self to a series of passing thoughts or *vijnāna santana* each of which disappears before the next comes into existence. Consciousness of succession cannot arise when the self is itself one of the transient entities which come and go, for, "two ideas which occupy different moments of time and pass away as soon as they have become objects of consciousness cannot apprehend or be apprehended by each other." Two such ideas, therefore, cannot have the

characteristic of itaretaraagrāhyagrāhakatva, so that each of them might figure in turn as the knower and the known in relation to each other.

It is interesting to note in this connection the universal dialectic of thought which accounts for the fundamental similarity between the arguments of Sāṅkara and those of the critics of empiricism in modern philosophy. Since Hume's reduction of the self-identical ego to an illusion, empiricists have tended to replace the ego by a series of 'perceptions' or 'feelings' which are in a flux. Each one of our perceptions, according to Hume, is distinct and separate from the others, and the fiction of an identical self arises from the laws of association only. Similarly, J. S. Mill finds no hindrance "to our regarding mind as nothing but the series of our sensations (to which must now be added our internal feelings) as they actually occur, with the addition of infinite possibilities of feeling, requiring for their actual realization conditions which may or may not take place, but which, as possibilities, are always in existence, and in many of them present."<sup>1</sup> Mill, however, while thus reducing the self to a series was equally conscious of the next moment of

The paradox implicit in the theory of self as a series.

<sup>1</sup> *Examination of Hamilton*, p. 205.

the dialectic and so does not fail to see that when mind is reduced to a series of feelings, "we are obliged to complete the statement, by calling it a series of feelings which is aware of itself as past and future; and we are reduced to the alternative of believing that the Mind, or, Ego, is something different from any series of feelings, or of possibilities of them or of accepting the paradox, that something which *ex hypothesi*, is but a series of feelings, can be aware of itself as a series."<sup>1</sup>

Mill, here, has the merit of defining clearly the two alternatives open to speculation when it comes to deal with the distinction between a series of feelings and the consciousness of that series. One of the alternatives leads to the doctrine of soul-substance, while the other has ingrained in it a paradox. The course of subsequent speculation on self and self-consciousness has oscillated between these two alternatives, sometimes approaching perilously to the theory of spiritual substance which was mercilessly exposed in Kant's relentless criticism of rational psychology; and sometimes, again, either facing boldly the paradox as an evil inseparable from the intellectual faculty, or working out Hume's own suggestions as to the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 212.

way which would lead to the mitigation, if not complete removal, of the paradox.

Now, Hume's reply, as is well known, to the problem of recognition is that the idea of identity is a fiction arising from the resemblance or similarity between the perishing 'perceptions'. It is the relation of resemblance, he points out, which is the cause of the confusion of the idea of a succession of related objects; and, it is added, "though we incessantly correct ourselves by reflection, and return to a more accurate method of thinking, yet we cannot long sustain our philosophy, or take off this bias from the imagination."<sup>1</sup> The result is that we feign "some new and unintelligible principle, that connects the objects together, and prevents their interruption or variation." In the same strain of thought, the problem is discussed by W. James who finds that the sense of our personal identity "is exactly like any one of our other perceptions of sameness among phenomena. It is a conclusion grounded either on the resemblance in a fundamental respect, or on the continuity before the mind, of the phenomena compared."<sup>2</sup> This explanation of the idea of identity has

Hume,  
W. James  
and  
Russell  
derive  
identity  
from  
similarity.

<sup>1</sup> *Treatise, Part IV, Sec. VI, p. 334.*

<sup>2</sup> *The Principles of Psychology, I., p. 334.*

remained essentially the same in the materialistic and the empirical developments of contemporary thought. For the behaviourist, as is well known, recognition consists in behaving in the same way when a stimulus is repeated as we behaved on the first occasion when it occurred. Bertrand Russell's views, again, stand admittedly on the Humian basis. The self, for him, being nothing more than the causal nexus among a series of events, he has naturally devoted a considerable amount of his acuteness to the problem of recognition. And the result of his analysis of memory is that "when we recognize something, it was not in fact the very-same thing, but only something similar, that we experienced on a former occasion. . . . . A person's face is always changing, and is not exactly the same on any two occasions. Commonsense treats it as one face with varying expressions; but the varying expressions actually exist, each at its proper time, while the one face is merely a logical construction.<sup>1</sup> • On every occasion, it is said, we see another member of the series, "but it is sufficiently similar to count as the same from the standpoint of common sense." Then almost borrowing his language from Hume, he observes that the

<sup>1</sup> *The Analysis of Mind*, p. 171.

vague identity, "which is really close similarity, has been a source of many confusions by which philosophy has lived."<sup>1</sup>

Saṅkara's reply to these attempts at deriving identity from similarity is, in one respect, substantially the same as that of the critics of empiricism. It is one of Green's repeated arguments, for example, that "the single impression in its singleness is what it is through relation to another, which must therefore be present along with it; and that thus, though they may occur in a perpetual flux of succession, yet, just so far as they are qualified by likeness or unlikeness to each other, they must be taken out of that succession by something which is not itself in it, but is indivisibly present to every moment of it."<sup>2</sup> The very term 'collection of ideas,' it is further pointed out, "is an absurdity, for how can a perpetual flux be collected? "The judgment of identity, therefore, is, for Green, an unavoidable crux for Hume.<sup>3</sup> Green's criticism of Hume's account of the idea of identity might be easily taken to be a striking reproduction of Saṅkara's arguments against Buddhism. The Buddhist's attempt to

But the judgment of similarity presupposes identity.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180.

<sup>2</sup> *Works*, I., p. 176.

<sup>3</sup> *Works* I., 264.



derive identity from similarity, Saṅkara maintains, is inconsistent with the former's theory of universal momentariness, because "the knowledge of similarity is based on two things," and for that very reason "the advocate of universal momentariness who denies the existence of one subject able mentally to grasp the two similar things simply talks nonsense when he asserts that recognition is founded on similarity." But his admission of such a mind "grasping the similarity of two successive momentary existences" would go against his theory of becoming.<sup>1</sup> If *vijnāna* be admitted to be momentary, it is said elsewhere, each must disappear every moment to make room for another, and in that case there can be no judgment of similarity or *sādrishyapratyaya*. When it is asserted that this is similar to that, the 'that' refers to a thing that is remembered while the 'this' refers to a present thing; but such a judgment would be impossible in the absence of one self enduring through the difference of time.<sup>2</sup>

It is needless to follow Saṅkara's arguments through the diverse contexts in which he seeks to press home essentially the same point in

<sup>1</sup> S. B. II., 2. 25.

<sup>2</sup> *Anekadarshina ekasyābhāvāt*—*Bṛih. Up. IV. 3.5.*

different words. Whether the self be reduced to a chain of momentary links or to *ālayavijñāna*, or the external things be reduced to *pravṛitti-vijñāna*, "unless there exists one continuous principle equally connected with the past, the present, and the future, or an absolutely unchangeable self which cognises everything, we are unable to account for remembrance, recognition, and so on, which are subject to mental impressions dependent on place time and cause."<sup>1</sup> That is, spatial, temporal and causal relations are inseparable from the *vāsanā* or mental impressions, and as such, they cannot be held together except through the synthetic activity of something which itself is not one of the related impressions. There can be no consciousness of the chain of *vijñāna*, or stream of conscious states, while each of them is irrevocably gone every moment giving place to a new state. If, on the other hand, the knowledge of the series of conscious states is admitted to be a fact in spite of the different states occupying different moments of time, then the theory of pure becoming falls to the ground.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> S. B. II. 2. 31.

<sup>2</sup> *Kṣanadvayavyāpitrāt ekasya vijñānasya punaḥ kṣanavādahāni.*

The self  
as the  
principle  
of revela-  
tion.

There is another important aspect of Saṅkara's arguments against the reduction of self to a series of passing thoughts, which comes to prominence in his reply to a supposed objection of the advocates of pure becoming. If the *vijnāna* or idea is to be apprehended by something other than itself, then according to the same argument we have to admit that that which knows the *vijnāna* must itself be known by something different from itself, and so on *ad infinitum* ; but in fact *vijnāna* is like the lamp which does not stand in need of another knower to shed light on it. In replying to this objection, Saṅkara develops his theory of self as the witness or *sāksi*. The witnessing self, it is maintained, is self-proved (*svayamsiddha*) and cannot be denied ; and as there is a vital distinction between the *vijnāna* and the self, one may be the subject or knower and the other the object. On the other hand, when *vijnāna* is compared to the light, it is not realised that " a thousand lamps burning inside some impenetrable mass of rocks " cannot manifest themselves, in the absence of an ulterior intelligent principle for which they exist as objects. Lamps in order to become manifest require some other intelligent agent furnished with the sense of sight. Similarly, the *vijnāna* also stands in need of some intelli-

gent principle for which it can exist as an object.

Saṅkara's arguments are perhaps stated in a clearer form in his commentaries on the *Upaniṣads* where he raises the self-same problem and seeks to distinguish between the *vijnāna* of the Buddhistic philosophy which has often been compared to lamp-light and the vedaṅta conception of *ātmajyoti* or self as the principle of revelation. Revelation or manifestation, he points out, has no meaning except on the supposition that what is revealed is distinct from what reveals. The jar which is revealed by the lamp-light must be something distinct from the light which reveals it, in the same sense in which the former is distinct from the rope. But, it may be retorted, the light may reveal itself as well as the jar, and it may thus be called self-revelatory. Saṅkara refutes this position by remarking that neither the jar nor the light can be revealed in the absence of consciousness for which both of them exist as objects. Put in terms of modern thought, Saṅkara's contention is that the relation of manifestation between the light and the jar presupposes the generic relation of both to the self for which they exist. Both have, therefore, the characteristic of *chaitanyāvabhāsyatvam*, which is the more ultimate relation than the

specific relation of the light to the jar. Similarly, that which is the knower of *vijnāna* must be distinct from it. The difficulty arising out of the *regressus ad infinitum*, Sāṅkara points out further, is easily removed if we remember that everything that has the mark of objectivity or *grāhyatvam* implies a subject for which it exists ; but the self which is always the subject does not imply the existence of another subject. Thus, it is the self and self alone that may be properly called self-revelatory, and it should on no account be identified with the passing thoughts.

The  
analogy  
of light.

It may be interesting here to remember that the comparison of consciousness to light has a particular fascination even for modern philosophers. Consciousness, says Hamilton "may be compared to an internal light, by means of which, and which alone, what passes in the mind is rendered visible"<sup>1</sup> The comparison, again, has been found very fruitful by the idealists in expounding the nature of self-consciousness. The problem of knowing the self, it has been suggested, becomes easy when we consider it as that "through which we know both itself and all other things"; "because it is the light which reveals both itself and the darkness."<sup>2</sup> Similarly,

<sup>1</sup> *Metaphysics I*, p. 183.

<sup>2</sup> Caird, *Hegel*, p. 47.

Professor Varisco believes that "The act of consciousness is perfect transparency ; it is clear to itself ; in it intelligence is present to itself. That I may know, it is necessary that I should be conscious of my consciousness, that I should know that I know ; an act of consciousness, which were to take place in the darkness of unconsciousness, would not be an act of consciousness. It follows that the act of consciousness proves the reality of itself and of the thinking subject, or rather is the reality of itself and of the thinking subject : in the act of consciousness, reality and cognition coincide."<sup>1</sup>

Now, Sankara who is himself fond of the analogy does not altogether deny that there is a sense in which consciousness reveals itself as well as the thing. But we must in that case remember that consciousness is in this context to be understood in the sense of an instrument only. That is, the light does not require another light to reveal itself to the eye, in the same sense in which the jar requires the light for revealing itself. And applying the analogy to self, it may also be said that the self does not stand in need of another self for knowing itself ; so "it is not a universal rule that wherever something is revealed to another, there must be an instrument over and above the revealer

<sup>1</sup> *Know Thyself*, p. 5n.

and the revealed.”<sup>1</sup> But an analogy should not be pressed beyond the breaking point; and it should not be forgotten that the self as the subject is presupposed by the light as well as the thing revealed, so that it is only within the universal relation of the self to the objects that we can strictly speak of the light as revealing the thing. In this sense, the light no less than the thing is an object or *avabhāśya*; but the self is not on that account an object of itself, and to know it as the subject of all thoughts and of all things is not to know it as an object. In other words, the self has to be known as the inexpugnable reality to which all objects point, but which itself cannot be known in the same way as we know an object.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Brih. Up. Com.*, IV, 3. 7.

<sup>2</sup> It may be interesting to note here that recent researches have shown an essential similarity between Vedāntism and Buddhism in some vital respects. The Buddhistic distinction between the *saṃvṛti-satya* and the *paramārtha-satya*, its conceptions of *prajñā parāmitā*, *tathatā*, *prapañca*, etc. are indistinguishable from the corresponding Vedānta concepts. Some, such as Mr. Y. Sogen in his *Systems of Buddhistic Thought*, have gone the length of questioning Śaṅkara's knowledge of Buddhism particularly of the Sarvāstivāda school. But these circumstances do not mitigate in the least the force of Śaṅkara's contentions against the conception of self as a series which in some form or other was frequently advanced by Buddhism.

While Saṅkara's criticism of materialism and Buddhism bring out the two-fold truth that the self is the transcendental ground of experience and that it is a unity, his observations on the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika conception of self emphasise another important truth which is equally fundamental for his position. "We have the ideas of matter and thinking," it has been remarked by Locke, "but possibly shall never be able to know whether any mere material being thinks or no."<sup>1</sup> Against the Cartesian doctrine that the soul thinks always, Locke holds that thinking is to be regarded, not as the essence of the soul, but as one of its operations that may be intermittent. In fact, any attribute or powers might be conferred upon any substance according to the "good pleasure" of their Maker. Similarly, he finds it inconceivable that the soul should always think any more than that the body should always move.<sup>2</sup>

The category of substance inapplicable to the self.

Locke here propounds a view that has been widely defended by philosophers of different schools of Indian thought, such as the Mimāṃsaka, the Naiyāyika, the Vaiśeṣika, etc. But the distinction between the soul-substance and

<sup>1</sup> *Essay, Bk. iv. 3. 6.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid. Bk. ii 1. 10.*



consciousness which arises out of the attempt to apply to the knowing subject the categories of which it is the source or presupposition has been, as we have seen above, the root-error of the psychological theories of self. And Sāṅkara is equally emphatic in his protest against conceiving consciousness as a quality of the soul-substance. His arguments, however, are frequently based on experience, and it is only at crucial points that he rises up to the standpoint of transcendental analysis. His contention from the empirical standpoint is that the apparent unconsciousness of the self in deep sleep, or swoon is due to the absence of the object of knowledge and not to the absence of consciousness. Just as the light cannot be apparent when there are no material things to be illumined, so consciousness remains unmanifested while there is no object to be revealed. Hence, the apparent unconsciousness does not prove the absence of consciousness.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, consciousness is not an adventitious quality generated in the non-intelligent soul, on the contrary, its essence consists in eternal intelligence or *nityachaitanyasvarupa*.

Sāṅkara's arguments, however, are not confined to the empirical standpoint; they

<sup>1</sup> S. B. II. 3. 18 ; II. 3. 50.

develop gradually into an epistemological analysis of the subject-object relation in knowledge. It is then argued that the self is intelligence itself; for, while the objects change their form, the *chaitanya* which cognises them in their various changes does not change, as it cognises every change in the objects. Where there is no *jñāna* or knowledge there can be no knowable; as the function of knowledge, like that of light, is to illumine the object, it is as absurd to infer the absence of knowledge from the absence of knowable objects as to infer the absence of light from that of the things to be illumined. The Vaināśika who would make such an inference would find it impossible to account for the process by which he himself comes to know the absence of knowledge; for, even the absence of a knowable object is a fact to be known.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the self, according to Kanāda and his followers, reduces itself to an unintelligent substance and consciousness to a quality produced by the combination of the self and the mind; that is, the self here is nothing more than "a substance just like a pot made red."<sup>2</sup> But the notion of relation or combination is applicable only in such cases in which both the

<sup>1</sup> *Commentary on Prosnōpaniṣad*, vi. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Commentary on Kenōpaniṣad*, ii. 4.

things connected belong to the same class and are yet distinguished from each other by their respective attributes. (*guṇavadguṇavatā saṁsriyate nātulyajatiyam*). Hence, the self for which exist all relations and relata, and which therefore may be aptly called an undifferentiated or attribute-less knowledge, is not a thing or substance which can be known by its defining attribute of knowledge, but the witness of all states of consciousness, an eternal *chaitanya* by which all states of consciousness are perceived as objects.

Sāṅkara and the modern idealists on the ultimate nature of the self.

When regarded from this standpoint, the self is also described as *prapañcasya ekāyanam* or the centre of the whole world including the things, the senses and the mind.<sup>1</sup> Or, again, it is described as the *bhuma* which, though it is the ground of every thing, does not itself stand in need of a ground or support ; it is *apratisthita* and *anāsrīta*.<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note here the close similarity between Sāṅkara's view on the self and that of Kant. The objective unity of apperception or the transcendental unity of Kant, as rightly urged by Prof. N. K. Smith, refers to the universal or absolutist aspect of our consciousness, to its transcendence of the

<sup>1</sup> S. B., I., 4. 19.

<sup>2</sup> *Chandogya Upanisad*, vii, 24. 1,

embodied and separate self ; and it is contended that the distinction, between the transcendental self and the empirical self remains whatever explanation may be adopted of its speculative or other significance.<sup>1</sup> We need not enter here upon the controversy in regard to the post-Kantian conversion of the transcendental unity of self into an Eternal Consciousness, nor need we stop to examine the slipshod manner in which Saṅkara replaces the concept of individual self by that of an Eternal Self. As is well known, the legitimacy of this conversion of the absolutist aspect of our consciousness into an Absolute Existence has been seriously questioned by many.<sup>2</sup> But what is important to note is the unique relation in which the self as knower stands to the world of objects, and this no sound theory of knowledge can afford to ignore ; and so far, we think, the analysis of Kant, Saṅkara and the idealists in general is unassailable. Existence-for-self, according to

<sup>1</sup> *Commentary*, p. 270.

<sup>2</sup> W. James, for instance, complains that Kant's successors converted the notion of *Bewusstsein* überhaupt into one infinite concrete self-consciousness.—*Variety of Religious Experience*, p. 449. A. Seth, however, goes the length of characterising it as the radical error of post-Kantian idealism—*Hegelianism and Personality*, p. 226. Similarly, the problem whether the witnessing self is the individual or the universal self has led to a protracted controversy in the school of Saṅkara. A brief history of the divergence of opinions in this respect is given by Appayadiksit in his *Siddhāntaleśa*.

the analysis of Saṅkara, is the highest category under which must stand every knowable thing; even the distinction between existence and non-existence exists for a self.

With this conception of the centrality of the self is reached perhaps the highest point to which finite thought that is necessarily discursive can possibly rise. And here Saṅkara is in entire agreement with the idealists, such as Green and Caird. Caird, for instance, accepts unhesitatingly that the self cannot be an object on the circumference. The object is the one world of experience, and so the self for Caird, as put by an eminent Indian Hegelian, "is not a part of this system, for the fundamental condition of its existence is that it should oppose itself to this system. Just as the centre in relation to which the circumference is possible cannot itself be a point in the circumference, so the unity of the self to which objects as members of a connected whole are necessarily referred cannot be one of those objects."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dr. H. Haldar, *Neo-Hegelianism*, p. 109.

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## CHAPTER XIII

### The Ultimate Problem of Self-Knowledge

We cannot close the exposition of Sankara's views on the nature of the self, utterly imperfect and brief as it is, without raising here a rather difficult question following from the centrality of the self. As all objects exist for the subject, as the subject is the centre to which all objects point, every theory that confuses the subject with the object must commit what may be called the fallacy of decentralisation of the ego. Now, the question that arises is : How can the subject for which exists every object can itself be known? This question has a long history, both in Indian philosophy and in western thought, and to enter upon a critical account of the history would be to undertake an impossible task in a short essay like the present. Yet, it will be interesting to accentuate a few crucial points that have historically arisen out of the attempts to solve the question.

A new  
problem.

There is no insoluble problem, if self is taken to be a thing.

The easiest answer to the problem of self-knowledge has been given by what we have called the psychological theory of self. The self, according to this theory, is only one among the many things in the universe, and so the knowledge of self does not differ in any essential respect from that of any other objects, such as the tree or the table. Thus, for instance, Prof. W. McDougall wonders why the consciousness of self should be thought to be such a great mystery, for, "whatever mystery is involved in thinking of oneself is the mystery of thinking in general, of consciousness or awareness of anything." As our belief in things, of all kinds is "founded upon our experiences of striving, of effort, of putting forth power or energy in the pursuit of our goals," so one knows oneself "as that which knows and strives, enjoys, and suffers, remembers and expects."<sup>1</sup>

The difficulty arises only for an epistemological theory.

But the psychological theory of self has been found to be unsatisfactory by many eminent thinkers who, following the Kantian tradition about the distinction between subject and substance, conceive the self to be a synthetic principle, a transcendental unity or an absolute consciousness. And, as we have our-

<sup>1</sup> *An Outline of Psychology, (third edition) p. 426.*

selves contended, the psychological attitude being inadequate for a right analysis of the knowledge situation, we are not even in sight of the real problem of self while we continue to look upon the subject-object relation as an inter-objective relation. But when the psychological theory of self is rejected as involving the fallacy of decentralisation of the ego, we give up at the same time the possibility of an easy solution of the problem of self-knowledge, and the difficulty perhaps grows in proportion to the success in avoiding the fallacy of decentralisation. Thus, as is well known, Kant himself was led to a theory of unknowable pure ego which "is so completely empty of all content that it cannot be called even a conception, but merely a consciousness that accompanies all conceptions. This I or he or it, this thing that thinks, is nothing but the idea of a transcendental subject of thought =  $x$ , which is known only through the thoughts that are its predicates, and which apart from them cannot be conceived at all." This condemns us, according to Kant, to turn round and round it in a perpetual circle.

Similarly, Green thinks that the only 'thing-in-itself' "is the thinking subject, which is not cause or substance, but the source of the categories of cause and substance."<sup>1</sup> And so,

Green on  
Kant.

<sup>1</sup> *Works I*, p. 211.



according to him, "the really prolific element" in Kant's theory of knowledge is the view of the noumenon "which he calls the ego, as the source of the categories and which on that very account cannot be brought under the categories."<sup>1</sup> *That* the self exists as the basis of all knowledge, he remarks elsewhere, cannot be doubted, "but *what* it is we only know through its so far acting in us as to enable us, however partially and interruptedly, to have knowledge of a world or an intelligent experience."<sup>2</sup> "We are further entitled to say of it, negatively, that the relations by which, through its action, phenomena are determined are not relations *of* it—not relations by which it is itself determined. They arise out of its presence to phenomena, or the presence of phenomena to it, but the very condition of their thus arising is that the unifying consciousness which constitutes them should not itself be one of the objects so related."<sup>3</sup>

Green's  
critics.

That Green's theory of self reduces to a *focus imaginarius* has been rightly detected by his critics. Thus, Balfour, for example, complains that Green's eternal consciousness reduces itself to "the bare geometrical point

<sup>1</sup> *Works III*, p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> *Prolegomena*, p. 58.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

through which must pass all threads which make up the web of nature";<sup>1</sup> and A. S. Pringle-Pattison, endorsing Balfour's criticism, characterises it as "the ideal focus into which the system of relations is reflected, the empty form of the Ego or consciousness in general, the dot upon the i, which the theory of knowledge exacts."<sup>2</sup>

Again, more recently, James Ward, in his very able analysis of self-consciousness, has been led to a theory of pure ego which he thinks to be inseparable from any fair and unbiassed consideration of the fact that every experience is *owned* by a subject. The only other alternatives, according to him, are either to accept a psychology without a mind and thus replace the subject by the unity and continuity of the contents of consciousness, or to leave unresolved the paradox that what knows can be identical with what is known.<sup>3</sup> But as these alternatives are not tenable in the long run, we must distinguish between the self as a presentation, and the self as a *focus imaginarius* which, though "suggested by the structure

James  
Ward.

<sup>1</sup> *Green's Metaphysics of Knowledge*, an article in *Mind*, IX, p. 89. (1884).

<sup>2</sup> *The Idea of God*, p. 199. Even Caird is supposed to be guilty of this reduction of ego to an empty form.

<sup>3</sup> *Psychological Principles*, p. 37.

of experience, is not only devoid of all 'content' in fact, but is necessarily so devoid from its very nature as limiting concept—like its analogue the point, that which has position but neither parts nor magnitude."<sup>1</sup>

Ward's  
critics.

As in the case of Green so here, again, it has been observed that considered as an attempt to meet the problem how the pure ego, as such, can be known at all, Ward's account is "a brilliant failure." For, it has been asked, how can the pure ego "be known at all, seeing that in becoming known, it must become an object and so cease to be pure subject?"<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Prof. Dawes Hicks calls Ward's theory of the pure ego "an insuperable difficulty in Ward's work," and so suggests that "the so-called pure ego is not to be conceived as standing to its states and processes in a relation similar to that in which a proton may be conceived to stand to the electrons in an atom; its states or processes (the so-called empirical self) are phases of its own being."<sup>3</sup> But does it really solve the difficulty? The solution seems to be evidently based on the supposition that the category of substance-attribute is applicable to the self as

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 377.

<sup>2</sup> Prof. G. F. Stout, *The Monist*, xxxvi, 1926, p. 47; *Studies in Philosophy and Psychology*, p. 358.

<sup>3</sup> *Hibbert Journal*, 1929-30, p. 177.

knower—a supposition which we have found ample ground for rejecting.

The problem has been handled from another side by the idealists, who also see serious difficulties in the theory of pure ego. “Self-consciousness,” according to them, “is the standing enigma for those who would separate identity and difference.”<sup>1</sup> When, on the contrary, it is seen that “the self exists as one self only as it opposes itself as object, to itself as subject, and immediately denies and transcends that opposition,” when, that is, it is seen to be “a concrete unity which has in itself a resolved contradiction,” there will be no difficulty in understanding that “its own existence is implicitly the solution of all the division and conflict of things.” In such theories of self-consciousness, we believe, there is a tendency, as the critics such as Ward and A. S. Pringle-Pattison have contended, to take the logical ideal for a real self. Moreover, though it is true that the centre has no meaning apart from the circumference, and *vice versa*, yet, we must not forget that when the self is called the centre, it is after all an analogy; for, taken literally, the centre as well as the circumference are *for* the self which therefore cannot be identified

<sup>1</sup> Caird, *Hegel*, p. 147.

with one of them. All distinctions are *for* the self, this is one of the invaluable truths which the idealists themselves have done much to bring out. Analogy perhaps is indispensable for representing the relation of the self to the not-self, but, even so, it must not be taken for more than its worth.

Bradley  
and  
Bosan-  
quett.

The difficulty is sometimes removed by some theory of immediate experience which is supposed to be non-relational. Thus, for instance, Bradley thinks that the recognition of the fact of immediate experience opens the one road to the solution of ultimate problems, such as the problem of self-consciousness; on the other hand, "it is in the end ruin to divide experience into something on one side experienced as an object and on the other side something not experienced at all."<sup>1</sup> Without entering upon a criticism of immediate experience, which we have partially done in the previous pages, it is interesting to remember that in spite of these remarks, Bradley himself has concluded elsewhere that the self, "where not hiding itself in obscurity, is a mere bundle of discrepancies."<sup>2</sup> And these contradictions in the appearances, according to him, cannot be removed except in

<sup>1</sup> *Truth and Reality*, p. 160.

<sup>2</sup> *Appearance and Reality*, p. 120.

a unique type of experience which is an all-embracing, supra-relational and absolute experience. This, we believe, amounts to the admission that the self, when it is grasped through finite discursive knowledge, remains as an insoluble problem. And it is significant that Bosanquet, who has an intellectual affinity with Bradley, has openly rejected even the concept of self as a subject, which, though superior to the concepts of a thing and a legal person, is itself one of the "vicious analogies" which should be avoided in a right analysis of the individual finite being.<sup>1</sup> And his insistence, at crucial places, on the imperfections of finite knowledge has called forth a protest even from such an eminent Hegelian as Haldane. "I have found it hard," it is complained, "to follow Professor Bosanquet and Mr. Bradley in assigning to feeling regarded *per se* the place in reality and in the highest knowledge which they seem to me to attribute to it."<sup>2</sup>

It is always risky to say anything definitely about the views of a philosopher who admits that in his book he has "used language which certainly contradicts itself, unless the reader perceives that there is more than one point of

<sup>1</sup> *The Principle of Individuality and Value*, p. 283.

<sup>2</sup> *Aristotelian Society Proceedings*, for 1917-18, p. 575.

views.”<sup>1</sup> But so far as his position in regard to the self is concerned,—and it is this in which we are interested in the present context,—his difference from other idealistic writers and the basic difficulties in his theory of self are, as far as we know, stated by none of his critics so clearly as by Dr. Haldar. Bradley, it is observed, sets down the self also as an appearance, although it is admitted that it is “the highest form of experience which we have.” It is in the self, however, that we have the only unmetaphorical instance of the harmony of one and many which, in Bradley’s view, is the character of the real. His “difficulty about the self is due to his identification of it with its content. By the self he understands the total mass of experience, as distinguished from any particular element within it marked off from the rest and specially noticed. But surely it is not this that Bradley’s contemporary idealists mean by the self when they conceive of it as the constitutive principle of the world. The self, as they interpret it, is the form of unity of experience and not merely the totality of its content. It is the ideal principle presupposed in the distinction between things and the mind that knows them, the intelligence apart from

<sup>1</sup> *Appearance and Reality*, (seventh impression) p. 557.

which the intelligible world has no existence. Curiously enough, this is not one of the meanings of the self distinguished by Bradley. Why he should have ignored the meaning it has in the writings of his fellow idealists, he does not explain."<sup>1</sup>

This tendency to identify the self with its content, we venture to suggest, is clearly discernible in the writings of Bosanquet as well, in so far as he identifies mind with a world and describes the individual as "a living world of content."<sup>2</sup> The self, he says, is nothing better than "the active form of totality, realising itself in a certain mass of experience as a striving toward unity and coherence."<sup>3</sup> And in his anxiety to get rid of the concept of self as "a unitary being, a sort of angel inside the mind,"<sup>4</sup> Bosanquet appears to dismiss altogether the notion of "a single agent or subject" as an antiquated idea. By this, however, to quote Dr. Haldar again, "he tends to pass to a somewhat Spinozistic monism."<sup>5</sup>

Even this summary consideration of the views on self should make it evident that the

A brief summary of the difficulties.

<sup>1</sup> *Neo-Hegelianism*, p. 252.

<sup>2</sup> *The Principle of Individuality and Value*, p. 289.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 335.

<sup>4</sup> *The Nature of Mind*, p. 125.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 281.



problem of self is yet in the region of unsettled controversy, and that much of the obscurity is due to the difficulty of understanding the relation between the self as the principle presupposed by all distinctions within knowledge and experience as the constructed totality. The knower, as J. Ward rightly insists, cannot be identified with the known, or, as put by Caird and Green, the self-distinguishing principle cannot be a part of the system. Even to describe it simply as knowledge is beset with difficulties, and there is, we believe, an element of truth in the remark that "Thought *exists* only as the thought of a thinker; it must be centred somewhere."<sup>1</sup> Knowledge, as we have maintained, implies conceptual construction, and it is through this constructive activity of the self that reality reveals itself; again, it is through this intellectual construction that the scientists and the philosophers discover the true nature of the world. If this be granted, then, it would be surely inconceivable that the unifying or constructing agent should itself be nothing but a construct or a mere system. And James Ward, we think, is not far wrong when he remarks, probably with Bradley's observations before his mind, that though the attempt to ignore one term of the relation is

<sup>1</sup> A. Seth, *Hegelianism and Personality*, p. 78.

hopeless, yet, "equally hopeless, even futile, is the attempt, by means of phrases such as consciousness or the unity of consciousness, to escape the implication of a conscious subject."<sup>1</sup>

We have only indicated some of the crucial points which should not be ignored by any really satisfactory theory of self-knowledge. The epistemological theories, as expounded by Sankara, Green, and the idealists in general, mark no doubt a valuable advance on the psychological theories of self; but it is impossible, with our intellectual constitution, to drive out the implication of "the thinker of all our inmost thoughts, the doer of all our very deeds." A clear knowledge of the pseudo-selves is no doubt a great achievement; but this, we suggest, does not solve the ultimate problem of knowing that which is neither a substance nor a cause, neither a resultant unity nor a series. Even when it is positively known as the transcendental unity or the ground of the world of knowledge, it is indistinguishable from the pure ego which has rightly been characterised as a limiting concept. It falls outside the scope of the present essay to take up this further problem. A unique type of solution of the problem has been presented by Sankara and his followers. Without entering into a detailed

<sup>1</sup> *Psychological Principles*, p. 40.

consideration of his position at this place, we may content ourselves with a few comments on the nature of his general procedure only.

The  
problem  
of inter-  
pretation.

The difficulties in interpreting Sāṅkara's philosophy in general and his theory of self in particular are by now well known to those who have attempted to present his thoughts in a systematic form. The ever-increasing mass of literature that has grown and is still growing out of the attempts to interpret his philosophy is so divergent in its bearings and so conflicting in its tendencies that it has become well-nigh impossible for a modern student to disentangle Sāṅkara's genuine views from what the interpreters have perhaps read into them. Thus, idealists and realists, theists and pantheists, have vied with one another in feeling the heartbeats of their respective theories in the apparently tangled skein of Sāṅkara's philosophy. One truth, however, has come out of the conflicting interpretations, namely, that the method of interpreting Sāṅkara by direct reference to his *ipsissima verba* is foredoomed to failure. When divergent interpretations are equally supported by profuse extracts from a philosopher's works, it is time to revise our method of interpretation.

Hence in presenting Sāṅkara's theory of self, it is necessary to follow a different method,

which may be called the indirect method of interpretation. His direct utterances in one context must be supplemented by what he indirectly implies in other contexts, and thus one should follow the spirit of his philosophy more closely than its letters. However arbitrary such a procedure may appear to be, it has to be adopted by everyone who would rethink an ancient doctrine in terms of modern thought. Moreover, this indirect method is indispensable for understanding aright Sāṅkara's position, for, as is well known, Sāṅkara, in presenting his thoughts, does not stick to one definite standpoint, nor does he always warn the reader as to the particular standpoint from which he is speaking in a given context. The result is that he seems very often to contradict himself. The great difficulty for the philosophic understanding of Sāṅkara's philosophy, it has been rightly said by Deussen, lies in the fact that neither in the text of the *Brahmasūtras* nor in the commentary are the esoteric and the exoteric conceptions clearly separated from each other, and the result is that "they stand in a continuous contradiction which is necessitated by the nature of the matter."<sup>1</sup> Hence the only criterion by which the validity of a particular interpretation has to be settled here is the measure of

<sup>1</sup> *The System of the Vedānta*, p. 98.

consistency which it introduces into the apparently conflicting utterances of the original philosopher. And if an interpretation stands this test, that is all that can be expected from the nature of the subject-matter.

The  
Vedānta  
as a  
spiritual  
discip-  
line.

The difficulties are aggravated when it is not recognised that Sāṅkara's philosophy is not a mere thinking consideration of things. Systematic thought or the intellectual impulse to unity has, for him, an important place in a complete scheme of knowledge, but it is not the ultimate organ of truth. Here we come upon a unique character of Indian orthodox thought which Sāṅkara shares with those belonging to different schools of culture; but, unlike them, he is not ready to rest satisfied with a more or less irrational acquiescence in a higher faculty of knowledge but proceeds to offer a reasoned justification of his agnosticism by an analysis of experience. From an examination of the nature of ordinary knowledge and experience, he points out its deep-lying pervasive features which make it on that very account inadequate for revealing Reality. On the other hand, he shows the necessity of systematic thought as a stage of discipline leading ultimately to the development of a higher faculty which alone is believed to yield correct knowledge in the absolute sense of the term. In other words,

thought, for Sāṅkara, is a generative condition of mystic Intuition, and though indispensable as a discipline, it must be utilised only as a means for going beyond itself. The illumination must come through the instrumentality of thought, but it must be left behind once the vision arises. Thus, on the one hand, he is never tired of insisting that the Unity of Intuition does not admit of a rational proof, and that reason, when left to itself, may lead to different conclusions in accordance with the respective forensic gifts of the thinkers. On the other hand, he does not hesitate to employ the choicest dialectical weapons of his armoury when engaged in exposing the fallacious arguments of those who would call in question the rationality of his position. This is surely an anomaly, for, if the Unity of Intuition be entirely beyond the competence of reason, all attempts at its rational justification must be altogether abandoned. But the apparent anomaly disappears when we remember the proper function of thought in his philosophy, which, as suggested above, is a mere generative condition and not an organ of Truth. Sāṅkara's whole point, to put it in terms of modern thought, is to insist that the question of origin is different from the question of validity, and thought, though unfit for real knowledge, has

an indispensable function in the genesis of Intuition.

This  
recognition  
reconciles a  
number  
of anomalies.

This not only removes the anomaly mentioned above, but throws further light on Saṅkara's repeated warning that all reasonings about the Absolute Truth must be conducted strictly under the guidance of the Scripture. Free thought leads to antinomies, hence such arguments alone are to be relied on as are calculated to train the logical intellect so as to transform it radically for the reception of the Truth. The sense of doubt and misgivings which may arise from acquaintance with arguments favouring opposite conclusions has to be removed by antagonistic arguments before the Vision may supervene. Thus the blind belief which furnished the starting-point of the discipline is changed into a rational faith, and in place of the dogmatic assertion of the Scripture there emerges a reasoned conclusion. Rational faith, however, is not an end in itself ; it simply helps to concentrate the mind on the thesis, and thus to transform the entire outlook for the reception of the Truth.

This removes another anomaly which has disturbed many an able exponent of Saṅkara. There are passages in his works which are clearly indicative of the state of liberation as a far-off end to be attained at a future date. In

flagrant contradiction with these passages, however, there are others that describe liberation as a fact eternally accomplished and, as such, distinct from an event in time. This anomaly, again, disappears when we remember the relation which, according to Sāṅkara, obtains between the finite and the infinite standpoint. The contradiction arises from the attempt to transfer the finite criterion of truth to a region beyond the reach of finite thought. The eternality of liberation defies all finite proof, and yet it is true according to the standard of absolute experience, much as the Pure Unity of Intuition defies all rational proof and yet its truth remains unimpeached despite the agnostic conclusions of reason. It is only when, and not before, the finite limitations are shaken off, and the finite nature is thus converted or transformed into the infinite, that the deliverances of finite experience are seen in their true character, and are literally swallowed up by absolute wisdom. But so long as the finite is still in the stage of discipline, the eternality of liberation remains as a mere article of faith or *śāstra dristi*. To convert this indirect knowledge into a living experience is just the objective of all the disciplinary measures including the thinking consideration of the scriptural dogma. That is, all truths



which are beyond the competence of finite experience, should be accepted in the first instance on the authority of the Scripture, and the eternality of liberation is one of these truths. They can be the content of living experience only on the attainment of the infinite status. Here, we find one of the splendid instances in which difficulties of interpretation have been aggravated by Sankara's general indifference to specify the particular standpoint from which a statement is made in a given context.

The finite  
and the  
infinite  
view-  
point.

Reasoned knowledge, as we have suggested above, is, for Sankara, an indispensable measure of self-discipline leading to a radical change of nature. This change is of the nature of a psychical metamorphosis, a conversion, or an abandonment of the finite self-hood. True knowledge in the strictest sense of the term is obstructed by the limitations inseparable from finite self-hood. It is true that there are criteria of truth and goodness within our experience as well, and these criteria cannot be doubted so long as we are what we are. But these standards are valid only within finite experience, and are, therefore, altogether unreliable for determining the absolute truth. The finite self-hood and the finite criteria are finally transcended, and their hollowness exposed with

the attainment of the infinite viewpoint before which they disappear like the stuff that dreams are made of. It follows from this that all our finite standards have no validity once the infinite standpoint is reached, and that the deliverances of absolute experience are irreconcilable with those of finite experience. Our finite categories burst, and the laws of our finite thought are relegated to a subordinate position when the Intuition comes, for which they prepared the ground. Like the temporary scaffolding which has its value only while the construction is not completed, they are abandoned once for all and rendered entirely useless with the advent of Intuition. It is then and then only that the Absolute Reality shines in its own light.

The Vedantic terms used by Saṅkara to indicate the difference between the finite and the infinite standpoint, as is well known, are *vyāvahārika* and *pāramārthika* respectively. This distinction pervades his philosophy in all its departments of theology, psychology and cosmology, and has a special bearing on his doctrine of self. It will, therefore, be necessary to refer to this distinction again. Meanwhile, it may be noted that the philosophers in India have differed in their conceptions of the ultimate state, but none has denied the reality of a state in which the

highest end is realised. This highest stage of self-evolution in which the real is revealed in its real character is indicated by Saṅkara as the *pāramārthika* state, or the state of *Vidyā* as distinct from the *vyāvahārika* or the state of *Avidyā*.

Saṅkara's  
mysticism.

The last point that we would like to touch upon in connection with Saṅkara's philosophy is the strong mystical tendency which pervades his philosophy, as this mystical aspect of his thought is inseparably bound up with the distinction between the finite and the infinite standpoint. The study of the Vedānta, as we have suggested above, is recommended not simply for intellectual satisfaction; the study, as Saṅkara has clearly indicated in different contexts, has to be undertaken to destroy *Avidyā* and the consequent *Adhyāsa* that is indissolubly connected with the finite nature. So, intellectual disquisitions have for their ultimate purpose the total annihilation of discursive intellect together with its diverse faculties. In other words, like the mystics in general, Saṅkara believes that finite intellect is necessarily discursive and is incapable of grasping a reality that is completely devoid of division and parts. Like Spinoza, he insists that understanding can conceive of anything only by attaching predicates to it, and consequently, a distinction-less

Reality, if there be any such thing, must reduce itself to a nothing that cannot stand as the subject of a significant judgment. But as mystic visions are not mere fictions of imagination, but are actual experiences in which the distinction-less One is realised, it is the intellect which is the source of our distorted outlook. Hence, the intellect has to be laid at rest; but in regard to the method of achieving it, he differs from most of the mystics. He does not think that it is possible to remove the intellectual wrappings of the finite self or to overcome the obstacles of discursive thought with a straight leap to the mystic platform. The annihilation, according to him, is to be brought about by educating the logical intellect on the lines of monistic texts and arguments. Hence Reality is to be conceived as the cause of the world, or, again, as that which manifests itself through the multifarious things of the world. That is, the concepts of cause, manifestation, etc., though they do not give us the Reality as it is in itself, yet help to discipline the intellect for the final cessation of intellectual faculties leading to the advent of the ultra-intellectual intuition.

Here Sankara's position is more similar to that of Plotinus and perhaps to that of John Tauler and J. Wessel than the mystical method

of St. Bernard or of Eckhart. The Absolute Consciousness, according to Sankara, is not to be attained through mere feeling, or anti-intellectual mystical practices, or again, by keeping off the labyrinth of dialectical thought; on the contrary, it has to be attained through a rigorous intellectual discipline leading ultimately to the destruction of the discursive intellect.<sup>1</sup>

Neo-  
Vedān-  
tism

By neo-vedāntism we mean here to characterise an important tendency in contemporary Indian thought which has arisen from the attempt to reinterpret Sāṅkara's absolute monism in the light of modern idealistic or absolutist thought. It consists essentially in, so interpreting Sāṅkara's thought as to make it less obnoxious to the charge that Sāṅkara's absolutism is vitiated by the fallacy of bare identity. The ablest exponent of this neo-vedāntism is perhaps Professor Radhakrishnan who has urged emphatically that even in the Upaniṣads the infinite does not exclude the finite, and so "from the doctrine of the sole reality of Brahman follows the reality of what

<sup>1</sup> We are glad to find that Sir S. Radhakrishnan—whose earlier views on the relation between intellect and intuition did not appear to us to have been always expressed unambiguously,—has after all come to recognise that for Sāṅkara intuition lies beyond intellect, and that reflective knowledge "is a preparation for this integral experience."—*An Idealist View of Life*, p.147.

is included in or based on it.”<sup>1</sup> They support the doctrine of unreality of the spatio-temporal and causal relations, *i.e.*, the doctrine of *māyā*, “only in the sense that there is an underlying reality containing all elements from the personal God to the telegraph post.”<sup>2</sup> Similarly, for Sāṅkara, “the world of experience becomes transfigured in the intuition of Brahman. The world is not so much negated as reinterpreted.” There is “Reality in appearances; Brahman is in the world, though not as the world. . . . Unreal the world is, illusory it is not.”<sup>3</sup> “The realisation of the truth does not mean the abolition of plurality, but only the removal of the sense of plurality. . . . Mokṣa is thus not the dissolution of the world but only the disappearance of a false outlook.”<sup>4</sup>

This tendency in contemporary Indian monism should be welcomed as a valuable corrective against another widespread tendency to ‘reduce Sāṅkara’s philosophy to subjective idealism. of the worst sort. And though we are inclined to believe that both these tendencies represent extreme views on Sāṅkara’s position, yet, neo-vedāntism augurates a happy sign in

<sup>1</sup> *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 190.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

<sup>3</sup> *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 583.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 637.

Indian thought, for, philosophy is bound to wither and languish while it is simply preserved like the mummies from the Egyptian tombs and not exposed to the full glare of living thought. The change is not regrettable if it leads to a fuller growth and a completer life.

The  
realistic  
tendency  
of neo-  
vedān-  
tism.

None can deny that there is much room in Sāṅkara's philosophy for new interpretations, and the extent to which it admits of reinterpretation may be easily seen from the admirable attempt that has been recently made to present Sāṅkara's philosophy from the realistic standpoint. The interpretation is singularly bold as well as original. In opposition to the traditionally accepted views, it has been ably maintained that the real nature of Sāṅkara's monism has been so far missed. The Absolute of his philosophy is not, as has been so far uncritically accepted, an abstract featureless identity, but it is a concrete spirit that reveals its nature to finite individual through his organisms; it is "the Universal, the Being, which evolves all its determinations and differences of nāma-rūpa out of the depth of its own being; it is the Being which distinguishes itself from itself and appears as its other."<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the finite self, it is urged, is not for Sāṅkara "a characterless being, but it has a distinct nature

<sup>1</sup> Pt. K. Sastri, *Advaita Philosophy*, p. 27.

of its own and cannot therefore be reduced into its states and activities. The self has been described by Saṅkara as transcending the external and internal elements of the body, but yet controlling and illumining them."<sup>1</sup> Finally, with regard to the world, it is shown that Saṅkara's theory has been grievously misunderstood. The world for him is not illusory or deceptive, it is "nothing but the *manifestation* of Brahmana's nature."<sup>2</sup>

In harmony with these interpretations, the distinction between the finite and the infinite view point is also explained in a hitherto unknown manner. It is our uncritical habit to regard the effects as different from the cause and "treat them as separated from, outside of, the cause—as self-subsisting and independent. This is our Vyāvahārika view of the world. But the vyāvahārika view is avidyātmaka." "From the pāramārthika view, the effects are really 'anānya'—non-different from, identical with, the cause. . . . Pāramārthika view is the real view."<sup>3</sup> "We must change our outlook and think of Brahman or the absolute Reality alone which is revealing in ourselves, and our states, etc., as its mere expressions. This is the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.



true pāramārthika view.”<sup>1</sup> “But from a higher view, from the pāramārthika standpoint—nāma-rūpa is not really different or ‘anya’ from Brahman, but inseparably connected with Brahman.”<sup>2</sup> “But those who have realised the truth that the underlying unity (Brahma) is untouched (unaffected) by the evolving multiplicity of changes—do not regard these changes as something separate and apart (vyatirikta) from Brahman, do not look upon them as so many independent and self-sufficient ‘things’ (anya) complete in themselves. To these people, the multiplicity of changes would appear merely as a *means* (upāya, dvārabhūtāni), as a mere *indicative mark* (parichāyaka lingāni), as an *expression* (sansthānamātram)—of the underlying Brahman. The gradually evolving changes would appear to these people, merely as an *instrument* (parārtha) for the realisation of the purpose (swārtha)—of the underlying Brahman.”<sup>3</sup>

The real  
meaning  
of San-  
kara.

Now, this interpretation of Sankara’s philosophical position ought to confirm our view that the direct method which relies exclusively on stray passages torn out of their respective contexts cannot be of much use in interpreting

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173-174.

a complex system of thought. The traditional interpretation according to which Sāṅkara's philosophy seeks to establish the sole reality of Brahman, the falsity of the world and the identity of the individual self with the Brahman, can also be shown to have for its support an overwhelmingly large number of clear expressions of Sāṅkara. It is, therefore, necessary for every interpreter to read a given passage always in the light of the general spirit of the system as a whole, as well as those which are in apparent conflict with its direct meaning. And as these conflicting statements cannot be welded into a harmonious whole except through a right understanding of the distinction between the finite and the infinite standpoints, one must resist the temptation of putting an arbitrary interpretation on Sāṅkara's conception of the difference of the *Pāramārthika* from the *Vyāvahārika* view.

Fortunately, however, Sāṅkara does not leave us altogether in doubt in regard to the exact sense in which the distinction has to be understood. *Paramārthatā*, it is said,<sup>1</sup> is that state in which the self realises its true nature to be eternal freedom above the distinction between the state of bondage and that of

<sup>1</sup> *Tattvopadesa*, 80.

liberation. Bondage and liberation, it is further added, are *māyāklipta*, and have no real connection with the self much as the real rope of ordinary experience is never affected by the inducement or the disappearance of the illusory snake.<sup>1</sup> The term *Paramārtha* occurs again in another important context.<sup>2</sup> The problem at issue here goes to the very root of Sāṅkara's position. The solution which he offers to the problem of the relation between the world and the Brahman amounts to relegating the world together with all its plurality and short-comings to the region of *nāmarūpa*. But the nature of the problem remains unaffected by this, because it is not really solved but only pushed back. For, the question now is to explain how the *nāmarūpa*

<sup>1</sup> *Vivekachudamani*, 571, 576.

<sup>2</sup> *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 3. 5. 1.—*Paramārthadrīṣṭyā paramātmātattvāt srutyanusāribhiranyatvena nirūpyamāne nāmarūpe mridādivikāravadvastvantāre tattvato na stah, . . . ekamevādvitīyam neha nanūsti kinchanetyādi paramārthadarsanagocharatvam pīti-padyate.*

That everything except the Absolute is ultimately non-existent and so absolutely unreal has been the clear thesis of Sāṅkara throughout his work, it is particularly prominent in his commentary on the *Māṇḍukya Kārikā*. On the other hand, he is equally uncompromising in his criticism of Buddhist idealism. This has brought upon him the serious charge of inconsistent procedure since the time of Bhāṣkara. On the other hand, it has favoured the growth of what we have called neo-vedāntism.

is related to the Brahman which is the only Reality, and beyond which nothing is real. This leads Saṅkara to make a clear-cut distinction between two types of knowledge corresponding to two different conditions of existence. The sole reality of the Brahman, he tells us definitely here, is comprehensible only by means of the absolute vision; the identity is *paramārthadarsanagôcharam* only. At the dawn of this absolute vision it is found that the *nāmarūpa* has no real existence at all. But while the finite nature is not annihilated, that which has no real existence appears as real, exactly in the same way as an ordinary illusory appearance is considered real previous to the removal of the error. Thus the scriptural texts indicating the unreality of the world of plurality, it is said, is true only in relation to the *paramārthadrīṣṭi* or absolute knowledge; and so there is no contradiction between the apparent reality of the *nāmarūpa* and the singularistic implications of the scripture. This *paramārthiki drīṣṭi* is elsewhere contrasted with the *laukika drīṣṭi*, the latter being characterised as a sensory-mental modification only (*chakṣuḥ-sanyuktāntahkaraṇavṛttih*) and, as such, transient and evanescent.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Commentary on Brih. Up. 3. 4. 2.*

It is tolerably clear from Sāṅkara's definition of the *pāramārthiki dristi* here that this extraordinary type of knowledge is something to be achieved, and that it is not compatible with the finite state of existence. All finite criteria of truth and error, good and bad, right and wrong, for Sāṅkara, as we have urged above, have validity *for* the finite self; and on that very account they are inapplicable beyond the sphere of finite selfhood. Finite thought, howsoever refined and logical, cannot, for example, prove the reality of the pure Identity of the Scriptures, for the obvious reason that every intelligible assertion implies the duality not only of the subject and the predicate, but also of the knower and the known. Yet, thought can,—and this is its true function—lead through an inner dialectic to a position which points beyond itself, much as the royal flags and emblems point beyond themselves to the King who is himself invisible.<sup>1</sup>

A discussion on the meaning of *asat*—K. Sāstri.

A correct interpretation of Sāṅkara's conception of the *pāramārthika* knowledge, as we have suggested here, is indispensable for glean- ing his ultimate views on the nature of self which he identifies with Reality. His uncompromising rejection of every sort of duality, as well as his elaborate criticism of ordinary know-

<sup>1</sup> *Com. Chāndógya Upanisad, VII, p. 3.*

ledge which cannot transcend duality, ought to make it clear that the *pāramārthika* knowledge is ultra-relational and so not to be interpreted in terms of relational categories. It is true that Saṅkara, as rightly urged by Pt. K. Śāstri, has a general tendency to distinguish between three classes of objects, and he uses the term *asat* indiscriminately for the *alīka* as well as for the *pratibhāsika* existence. But it is difficult to agree that the latter or even the phenomenal objects, for Saṅkara, "cannot be declared to be 'false' in the sense in which the objects śaśa-visāna, etc., can be so declared."<sup>1</sup> For, Saṅkara accepts unhesitatingly the position of Goudapāda, namely, that the entire world of ordinary experience, when viewed from the ultimate standpoint, was never created, and is never dissolved, and he actually compares it to the rabbit-horns.<sup>2</sup> Thus, even the phenomenal world, though real for us, is *alīka* in its ultimate nature. Vidyāranya's threefold distinction of *jñānadristi*, *yuktidristi* and *laukikadristi*, and his condemnation of the phenomenal world as *tuchcha* from the view-point of true knowledge,<sup>3</sup> point to the same conclusion.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> *Satohi utpatti-pralayo vā syānnāsatah sasaviśān-ādeḥ*—Commentary on *Māndūkya Kārikā* 32.

<sup>3</sup> *Panchadasi, Chitradviṣa*, 128.

Kirtikar  
and Das  
Gupta.

Our remarks are equally applicable to Mr. V. J. Kirtikar's interpretation of the term *asat*. This term, he has contended, means "the unreal manifestations of the Reality upon Itself," and so the appearances are unreal, because they are "not independent of or apart from that Reality; unreal, also, because transient and ephemeral and even illusory."<sup>1</sup> It is no doubt true that *asat* is frequently used in the vedantic literature in the technical sense of what is temporary, on the other hand, *satya-tvam* is defined as *vādhārāhityam*. But to take this as the ultimate meaning is to ignore altogether the other view according to which the world never exists at all. That which never exists cannot be said to be even temporary. This meaning of *asat* is rightly emphasised by Dr. S. N. Das Gupta when he remarks that "the falsehood of the world-appearance consists in this that though it appears to be the reality or an expression or manifestation of the reality, the being, *sat*, yet when the reality is once rightly comprehended, it will be manifest that the world never existed, does not exist, and will never exist again."<sup>2</sup> It is, however, incomprehensible why he takes this meaning to be but "another way" of expressing the other

<sup>1</sup> *Studies in Vedānta*. p. 192.

<sup>2</sup> *History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I., 443.

meaning of *asat* according to which it refers, not to the absolutely non-existent, but to that which is only temporary. But the distinction between these two meanings of the term, we are inclined to believe, is fundamental for the vedāntic position; and it is his indifference to this important distinction which partly explains the half-hearted tone in which he remarks that Sāṅkara "was never afraid of indulging in realistic interpretations; for he could easily get out of the difficulty by asserting that all the realistic conceptions found in the *sūtras* or in the Upaniṣad passages were merely an estimate of things from the common-sense point of view."<sup>1</sup>

We are glad to find ourselves here in substantial agreement with Professor Ranade who has admirably summarised the fundamental propositions of Sāṅkara's philosophy in the following words: From the point of view of ~~the~~ Absolute, *sub specie æternitatis*, Nature and Soul and God are all equally appearances. But *sub specie temporis*, there is a Nature, there are the Souls, there is a God. Sāṅkara makes the great distinction between the Pāramārthika and Vyāvahārika views of reality as Kant makes the distinction between the noumenal

R. D.  
Ranade.

<sup>1</sup> *History of Indian Philosophy, Vol. II., p. 2.*



and the phenomenal.<sup>1</sup> Prof. Ranade has further contended that the objections which Rāmānuja has brought against Saṅkara's theory of Māyā are merely an *ignoratio elenchi*, for, they ignore this important distinction. But "we shall entirely mistake Saṅkara's point of view if we do not consider the great distinction that he draws between the pāramārthika and the vyāvahārika views of reality."<sup>1</sup>

It may be interesting to note in passing that Professors Radhakrishnan and Ranade, though agreeing in their interpretation of the main position of Saṅkara, appear to have serious differences in their conceptions of Saṅkara's destiny of the finite self. According to Prof. Ranade, immortality, for Saṅkara, "consists in being finally atoned to Divinity and being absorbed in that Divine Life in such a way that no trace of personal existence remains."<sup>3</sup> Prof. Radhakrishnan, on the other hand, rejects the hypothesis that Saṅkara "favours the absorption of the individual in the eternal Brahman," and supposes that what Saṅkara indicates is "that while the released soul attains at the very moment of release a universality of spirit,

<sup>1</sup> *Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy*, p. 215.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 231.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 214.

it yet retains its individuality as a centre of action as long as the cosmic process continues."<sup>1</sup>

The same confusion about Sañkara's conception of the distinction between the *pāramārthika* and the *vyvāhārika* standpoint seems responsible for such remarks as that "Sañkara's apparent abdication of private judgment, his reliance on instruction imparted by another, and his abhorrence of unfettered thought, are disconcertingly suggestive of the narrowness of European medieval philosophy, and seem to place a deep chasm between Vedāntic and modern speculation."<sup>2</sup> The relation between dialectic thought and intuition, as we have suggested above, is not, for Sañkara at least, one of antagonism. The path to intuition lies through the labyrinth of reasoned discourses, and this explains his invectives against the method of mystical practices, or of mere feeling. Thought, for Sañkara, is no doubt a mere stage in the discipline, but nonetheless it is an indispensable stage. Sañkara will continue to be misunderstood while it is not clearly realised that, as we have elsewhere contended,<sup>3</sup>

W. S.  
Urquhart.

<sup>1</sup> *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 306.

<sup>2</sup> Principal W. S. Urquhart, *The Vedānta and Modern Thought*, p. 78.

<sup>3</sup> *Appearance in Sankara's Philosophy*, a paper read at the Dacca Session of the Indian Philosophical Congress, 1930.

his procedure is analogous to that of Plotinus for whom God is neither to be expressed in speech nor in written discourse, though we have to rationalise on Him "in order to direct the soul to him and to stimulate it to rise from thought to vision." We cannot give a better expression to the spirit of Saṅkara's philosophy than in the language used by Dr. W. R. Inge in expounding the position of Plotinus. Dialectic, he says, "is the study of first principles which leads up to intuitive wisdom. It passes through logic, and at last rises above it."<sup>1</sup>

M. N.  
Sircar.

It may be noted in conclusion that our interpretation of the Vedānta method agrees in the main with that of another Vedānta scholar, Dr. M. N. Sircar, who rightly emphasises that the logic of Vedāntism "has followed the lead of psychic experience."<sup>1</sup> Vedāntism, it is again rightly observed, seeks to open up the path of direct insight and realization."<sup>2</sup> We must only add that though "the psychological opening" is accepted here as the only pathway to reality, yet, it is reason or logic which brings about this opening.

<sup>1</sup> *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, II., p. 105.

<sup>2</sup> *Comparative Studies in Vedāntism*, p. 154.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 263.

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